

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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56th year of publication

Hamilton Christian students speak out to government on tax credit issue

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO, Ont. — Students from a Christian school in Hamilton put a face to the issue of tax credits for independent schools when they appeared before a committee in Toronto June 11 to tell their personal stories and views of the benefits of Christian schooling and the hardships faced by some families who choose to support it.

Brainstorming session

Students from Hamilton District Christian High School (HDCHS) teacher Harry Meester's economics class spoke out in support of the proposed tax credit before a government committee at Queen's Park (the Ontario Legislature). Meester explains that their speeches "are the result of a classroom brainstorming session. We identified the key issues we felt needed to be addressed at the Bill 45 hearings. Our class broke into four focus groups of five students each. The focus groups researched,

debated, team-wrote and edited the speeches." Then, on June 11, a spokesperson for each group addressed the committee.

The Hamilton students got considerable mainstream news coverage. Their written speeches were published in the *Hamilton Spectator* on June 6, five days before their presentation, and later there was television news coverage of the event. On June 21, two of the students participated in a CBC-Radio open forum discussion on *This Morning*.

Sarah Postuma, who has attended HDCHS for five years, explained some of the core values of her school, and emphasized the close connection parents have with the school. "Our parents believe that school is an extension of the home, and have exercised that belief through their choice of schools," she explained. "For 20 years, my parents have been involved in Christian education by sending five children through elementary and secondary schools....

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COURTESY HEATHER HORNSVELD

Students from a Hamilton District Christian High School economics class on the steps of Queen's Park. Teacher Harry Meester is in middle row, third from left.

As a family, we have had to make sacrifices, largely due to tuition costs. However, my parents were willing to make these sacrifices because they wanted the

teachers and curriculum to be consistent with their values.

"Even though our school, along with many other independent religious schools, is rooted in

biblical beliefs, we are not limited by our faith. Many controversial issues are presented in our classrooms, given to us from a variety of perspectives. This allows us to understand many life views and to discuss issues from those perspectives. This, we believe, is the best way to learn."

Teachers answer to parents

"We, as a school community, believe that our teachers are answerable to our parents and that the curriculum must be consistent with our family values, as well as what the government regulates. Each year, our school is inspected to see if it is meeting all the regulations. Each year we pass with flying colors. Yet, even though we are required to meet all government regulations, we are still not supported in any way."

Postuma noted, "Our teachers are friends and mentors to us. They are willing to go far beyond the call

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Christian agencies meet physical, spiritual needs in Burundi



COURTESY FRED REGIER

Fred and Else Marie Regier at home in Burundi.

Alan Doerksen

BUJUMBURA, Burundi — Ongoing civil war and a malaria epidemic are among many problems facing the people of Burundi. But churches are growing there, and Christian workers are co-operating to help meet the spiritual and physical needs of Burundians.

Fred and Else Marie Regier are Christian relief workers with African Revival Ministries (ARM), based in Bujumbura, and capital of Burundi. "I would say the biggest challenge Christian workers face, is the fact that they cannot reach the most needy people in the countryside because of the ongoing war," Fred Regier told *Christian Courier* in an e-mail interview.

"Their life is in great danger when they drive even outside the city limits. In general, there is not any opposition for Christian missions and relief work. The government welcomes any relief by any organization. The only opposition is from the rebels who prey on anyone who may be traveling in the countryside."

Nowhere to turn but to God

"Some of the biggest needs for the Burundi people are health care and education. Because [of] the war... and the two year sanctions on the country [imposed by surrounding countries], manufacturing has ground to a halt. They

desperately need technical education."

Besides this, Regier explains, "Over the last six months malaria has been epidemic. Also malnutrition is on the rise, and will most likely get worse in the next few months with the dry season upon us. The violence has also been blamed to be a part of causing malnutrition. People are not able to get food for fear of their lives, and if they do have food, their homes are looted by rebels."

"Burundi and Rwanda once used to be a single country. The people in both countries are exactly the same. Burundi was affected by the genocide which

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News

Students highlight needs, advantages of Ontario's Christian schools

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of duty, both in the classroom and in extracurricular involvement, to ensure that we, the students, succeed."

Big step in right direction

An equal right to education was focused on by HDCHS student Josh VanKampen. "The United Nations realizes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," he said. "One of these rights is free or supported education. On November 5, 1999, the UN ruled that Ontario's policy of funding Catholic, but not other, religious schools is discriminatory.... The UN has seen that Ontario is not treating the independent schools fairly, but the proposed tax credits would be a big step in the right direction for equality.... Discrimination is unjust and needs to be taken out of our education system before the goal

of economic equality can be reached."

Effective use of funds

Independent Christian schools use money very efficiently, explained Grade 12 student Corrie Kessler. "The nature of this new bill, which allows a tax credit for parents who support independent schools and not the actual schools themselves, almost guarantees an effective use of the funds," explained Kessler. "As it stands, with parents controlling the spending of these dollars, it is not possible for the money to be wasted on excesses, such as bulky administration costs, which may have been a problem if the school held these funds.

"Our books are audited annually and are extremely transparent and open to any inquiry or improvement. We are held responsible financially to Revenue Can-

ada, to the school's finance committee, and to more than 500 sets of parents who pay tuition. All of these people hold a firm belief that inefficiency is not a wise or stewardly manner with which to deal with our God-given resources. Our school's finances must therefore line up to this standard....

"All of the teachers at our school hold teaching degrees and because of their firm belief in the importance of Christian education, they are willing to work for less money, and go beyond the call of duty."

Addressing the concern that the tax break might encourage students to leave public schools to go to private ones, Kessler asserted, "This is not a competition for survival, and independent schools are not attempting a hostile takeover of the public school system's funds or territory. Education is not a

business. The vast majority of independent schools are not run for profit. The only things to be gained are equity and a high standard of education."

Economic hardships

HDCHS student Nate DeJonge sketched out some of the economic hardships faced by families which send children to Christian schools. "The popular perception is that private schools consist of mostly upper-class families. However, our school population includes a wide cross-section of incomes," DeJonge pointed out. "There are many people in our school who find it a struggle to make ends meet, let alone pay for the cost of private education."

DeJonge gave the example of the sacrifices his friend Darrell and his family have had to make. "His family has been paying for Christian education for him and his three

siblings for the past 18 years," explained DeJonge. "Darrell and his siblings were given the opportunity each year to attend a public school, or attend an independent Christian school and not go on vacation that year.... Every year, they have given up a possible family vacation. Darrell's family has also had to sacrifice luxuries such as going out for dinner and driving a new car because of the financial burden of Christian school."

"The government's planned tax credit would relieve some of the financial pressure associated with tuition," DeJonge asserted.

On behalf of the group, fellow student Jake Belder concluded, "The proposed tax credit for parents of children who attend independent schools is something we are very appreciative of and thankful for.... We hope that this bill will be passed and that equity will be achieved in Ontario."

Christians in Burundi face dangers and challenges

... continued from page 1

swept Rwanda, because the same genocide swept through Burundi. The only difference between Rwanda and Burundi is that, the war never stopped here."

But despite these problems, Regier asserts, "Churches are growing rapidly in Burundi. Everyone you talk to has lost someone close to them in the war. People have no one to turn to except God. The church we attend here has built two additions onto their building in less than two years. At present there are about 4,000 to 5,000 attending."

One major challenge facing the church is "the danger of moving from one place to another to preach the gospel and evangelize," explains Regier. "Many pastors have to care for more than one church and risk their lives weekly getting back and forth. I have traveled into the countryside a number of times to visit some of the work that ARM is doing. I have seen bombed out and burned churches. For these pastors and evangelists to travel in such volatile conditions God pours out His grace on them."

Ongoing turmoil

According to one source, another challenge facing the Burundian church is to accept racial differences. Even after people become Christians, it is a very hard thing to forgive each other over what has happened in the past — neighbor killing neighbor, colleague killing colleague, friend killing friend.

Burundi lies in the heart of



central Africa, in the Great Lakes Region. It has a population of six million made up of two main ethnic groups — 85 per cent Hutus and 14 per cent Tutsis, the remainder being Twas or pygmies. The region has seen considerable ethnic tension and conflict in the past eight years, with massive population displacements. More than 200,000 people have died in the violence since 1993. Within Burundi itself, there has been no political stability during that time, with coups and violent conflict. Since the military coup of June 1996, the neighboring countries have imposed economic sanctions on Burundi which have made the situation for the poor extremely serious. In order to try to stabilize the situation, the government has required large numbers of people to move from their homes into

displacement camps where their security is said to be assured. The economic sanctions have been lifted, and some have returned home from the camps.

Most Burundians are nominally Catholic, but there is also a considerable Muslim influence, especially in the capital, Bujumbura, according to Regier.

The major divisions in Burundi are ethnic, principally between the better educated, and generally richer minority Tutsis and the poorer less well-educated majority Hutus. The Twas (Pygmy) are generally ignored and live in isolated pockets of Burundi. The conflict has left almost every family bereaved by at least one family member. There are many widows and orphans. The literacy rate is very low and has declined during the recent years of conflict due to closure of schools and movement of population.

During the past five years since the civil war started in Burundi, the number of street kids has increased considerably. It is now estimated that in the city centre alone there are 6,000 children who sleep on the streets every night. About 95 per cent of these children are

orphans because their parents have been killed in the war. The remaining five per cent may have some family such as a grandmother, aunt or neighbor who looks after them, but they spend the day on the streets begging in order to take home money in the evening to buy food for themselves and any family they have.

Message of reconciliation

"My wife Else Marie and myself with our four children have been here since September '99," explains Regier. "Else Marie works in the baby rescue unit. She is a Registered Nurse. She is responsible for the running of the unit, which includes the 15 infants at present, and also all the staff....

"My work is three part. My first duty is to maintain all the houses that are part of the CRIB ministry. There are now eight buildings that are used for housing orphans and educating them. Secondly, I have set up a woodworking shop where I build new furniture for the houses and the school. Thirdly, I have been taking the older boys in the orphanage through some carpentry and woodworking training classes. They have learned about many tools, and have built stools, chairs, boxes, and some games."

African Revival Ministries (ARM) works mainly in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, which includes Burundi and Rwanda. It is an indigenous work founded in 1989 and is totally committed to working across all ethnic groups and in partnership with local community administration, churches,

aid agencies, other NGOs and government departments.

Its vision is to:

- Declare a message of reconciliation through spiritual and practical projects;
- Help develop the nation and encourage people to be self-sufficient as well as supporting their local community;
- Provide quality medical care irrespective of ethnic group or ability to pay.

In Burundi these are expressed through a program of rebuilding, reconciliation retreats, a small general and maternity hospital, a specialist emergency surgical clinic, health centres incorporating testing laboratories and pharmacies, X-ray facilities, an AIDS support and education centre, feeding programs for children who are malnourished, widows training and business projects, schools and the CRIB (Children Rescued in Burundi) baby and children centres.

CRIB comprises a specialist baby care and rescue unit, three orphanages and a school. In addition the work responds to the needs of children under the age of five, who are at present living on the street and in displacement camps, through feeding programs to those who are malnourished. At present there are 55 children being cared for in the orphanage and many hundreds of orphans being fed weekly in the city centre.

"ARM works well with other NGOs," observes Regier. "We work closely with Tear Fund, World Vision, and some other UN based organizations."

News/Politics

CLAC argues in favor of education tax credit

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Unlike other teachers' unions, the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) is strongly in favor of the Ontario government's proposed tax credit for families with children at independent schools.

Andrew Regnerus, a CLAC representative, spoke about CLAC's position on the issue to a joint government and opposition committee in St. Catharines, Ont., at the first of five days of public hearings held in five cities. Regnerus is personally involved in the issue, as the assistant secretary of the Association of Christian Teachers and Support Staff (ACTSS) which is affiliated with

CLAC and has represented the staff of two Christian schools in St. Catharines since 1994.

"Congratulations to our government for its courage to do the right thing with respect to equity in educational choice," said Regnerus, at the hearings in St. Catharines. He was critical of Ontario's public school system, which he said denies "natural justice for Christian parents and teachers." Although public schools "were Protestant Christian in nature at the outset ... with growing religious plurality in Canada, the ongoing Christian character of the public schools became untenable," he observed. "Government could have supported equally schools of alternate faiths and philosophy,

but until now there has been no move in that direction."

Although some Christian and other people of faith accept a "neutral" education, Regnerus asserted, "We challenge that a philosophy of education, or outlook on life generally, can be neutral."

These days, it is hard for Christian teachers to speak openly about their beliefs in Ontario's public schools, contended Regnerus. Instead, other belief systems besides Christianity are given greater attention in the schools.

A compromise solution

The establishment of independent Christian schools in Ontario "has been made necessary by the

dilution of Christian values in Ontario's population," said Regnerus. "Those who have kept a Christian character in private schools deserve full funding, but a tax credit is a compromise solution."

Because of the complete lack of government funding for independent schools until now, Regnerus said that Christian teachers make a "salary sacrifice" and "share in the parental economic crunch by accepting salaries considerably lower than that of the teachers in public schools and separate schools."

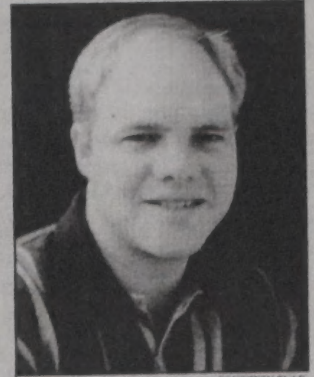
Challenging the view that the tax credit will primarily benefit elite private schools, Regnerus contended, "We are in no way among the elite private school supporters that all private schools are depicted as serving."

Fundamental justice matter

"Our choice to be separate is a fundamental justice matter involving freedom of association and freedom of educational choice. We are asking that our supporting families have these basic freedoms respected financially," explained Regnerus.

Although some people accuse Christian schools of teaching intolerance, Regnerus asserted that Christian teachers "teach love for neighbor, dignity of all as created persons, and God's desire to include all people as his people.... It is ironic ... that the existence and funding of the Roman Catholic separate system has not led to intolerance, hatred, segregation."

Regnerus pointed out that other provinces which provide some funding for Christian schools have thriving public and alternate schools. "There has been no crumbling of public education; no mass exodus to private schools," he noted. "In fact, in any monopoly, a certain laxness or



COURTESY CLAC

Andrew Regnerus

lukewarmness will occur. It is human nature. The government's bill, which will strengthen parental ability to choose, will at the same time strengthen public education. Long-term strength arises from alternatives.... We need both public and independent schools to function well in order to strengthen each other."

Regnerus told *Christian Courier* he would like to see independent schools get the same level of funding as the public and Catholic separate school systems. CLAC will continue to be in touch with the Ontario government on the issue of school funding.

"The source of the revenue for the tax credit is not at the expense of public education," Regnerus points out, because there is no budget allotment of tax dollars to independent schools. Instead, tax credits are involved. "It's not funding directly to schools, it's a tax rebate to the parents."

Although he acknowledges that the tax credits will cost the Ontario government \$300 million a year in lost revenue, he says, "It's just a drop in the bucket," because it only represents about two per cent of the provincial education budget.

Canadian Alliance plagued by Smith syndromes



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

After a dramatic rise to prominence as the Reform Party in the mid-1980s, the new Canadian Alliance seems bent on destroying itself. Why? I would argue that it is plagued by two syndromes, the "Mr. Smith syndrome" and the "Al Smith syndrome."

In the classic 1939 film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Jimmy Stewart plays a young freshman senator, coming into the upper chamber of the U.S. Congress filled with high expectations concerning his own ability to make a difference. Virtuous, idealistic and more than a little naïve, he is forced to take on his own fellow senators, whose enjoyment of entrenched power has slowly corrupted them over the years. Since Frank Capra made this film, Americans in particular have been captivated by the myth of the decent outsider storming the beltway and shaking up the business-as-usual activities of unprincipled politicians — and all on behalf of the people.

Fast forward to 2000

Fast forward to 2000, north of the border. Alliance members vote to turf out their proven leader, Preston Manning, and trust their fortunes to a more exciting, if largely untried, outsider from Alberta. When he fails to lead his followers to the promised land of political power, many of those favoring his leadership only a short time earlier now turn on him, hoping that a new savior will accomplish what he has been unable to in the short time given him.

Yet neither a party leader nor a prime minister is a napoleonic figure, capable of cleaning things up by the sheer force of his own charismatic personality or even by exercising the ordinary powers vested in his office. One official among many, his leadership is not that of a military commander leading his forces into battle, but of a practical politician who is himself dependent on the support of other officials to get things done. This is true even in our own system which places so much power in the hands of a party leader.

This brings us to the Al Smith syndrome. Himself an unsuccessful presidential candidate, Al Smith argued that the cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy. Americans have bought into this philosophy with a vengeance over the years, adopting numerous reforms in the interest of empowering the grassroots.

Grassroots nothing of the sort

But the supposed grassroots is nothing of the sort. Those who take the trouble to become members of a political party are the activists, who are necessarily a minority of the party's actual and potential support base. In the wake of the Democratic Party reforms in the U.S. during the late 1960s and early '70s, it seemed that it had doomed itself to nominating virtually unelectable candidates (George McGovern, Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis) attractive to the activists but less than credible to the American electorate at large. And when it did successfully put a candidate in the White House (Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton), he was less than effective at working with even the Democratic, much less Republican, members of Congress.

The Canadian Alliance claims to believe in grassroots democracy. But its MPs cannot decide which manifestation of the grassroots is in charge of their party: the party members and activists, potential and actual party supporters, or the whole of the Canadian electorate. This explains in large measure its current fractiousness.

The only hope for the Canadian Alliance is to abandon its hallowed belief in The People as fount of all wisdom and right and to exercise genuine leadership in the interest of doing public justice to all Canadians.



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Editorial

Leading people out of the church

Harry der Nederlanden

The church and its leadership structure (offices) came into being after, no, at Pentecost. Then the Holy Spirit entered into the disciples to anoint and equip them to serve as the risen Lord's presence in the world.

In a sense, we might even say that in the New Testament the offices, the Apostles, came first. But that would sound rather Roman Catholic.

True, Jesus' twelve apostles represented the tribes of Israel, and its priests and prophets. The church, defined as God's people, the theologians of the Reformation contended, has existed from the beginning. Pentecost is a new beginning, but it is firmly rooted in history and in creation. The church is commissioned on the Jewish Feast of Harvest, a celebration akin to our Thanksgiving, for it acknowledged that the harvest is a gift of God. Firstfruits were offered to him to symbolize that the entire harvest was his. It was also called the Feast of Booths because the Israelites moved into temporary shelters or booths during this week to remind themselves of the Exodus pilgrimage through the desert, when they were dependent upon God for their daily bread.

When we as a church seek to define what we are and the nature of our leadership, we rightly look

back to these roots.

Yet, although the church has an ancient lineage, it is more closely related to the end-times, to the *eschaton*. With the coming of the Holy Spirit we enter into the Millennium. Whatever you may make of the biblical texts about what is to happen at the end of time, there are plenty of references to the fact that with the coming of Jesus, the reign of God begins in a dramatically new way, a way that involves God now tenting with us. We are now living in the between time — the time between Christ's first and second coming, the time of the Spirit, the time in which God's people live both as strangers and as sons and daughters of God.

The church's horizon

This is the time in which Christ by his Spirit gives us the church as his body, and this is the time in which the church of God is initiated ever more fully into the meaning and implications of the Kingdom of God in us and among us and ahead of us. We cannot speak of the church without also speaking of the coming Kingdom, for the latter is the church's horizon, its ultimate context.

The church is not put here as the container or circumference for all our religious activity. It must not become the locus and focus of all our service, a greedy space that makes ever greater demands upon our time and energy on the supposition that whatever we do there has greater value than, say, what we do at home, at work, as citizens, as volunteers, or, for that matter, playing soccer or going to the theatre. Maybe this is a risky thing to say in an era when people are devoting less time to church, but we must remind ourselves that the church is not identical with the Kingdom. It has to kick its members out the front door, out the back door, out the windows. It's not a sealing jar, it's a slingshot.

We are called to gather and to worship as a body, but that's not the most worthwhile, the most religious activity we are to do under the sun. God wants to be worshipped, but again and again he stresses to his people that the sort of worship he appreciates most is lives lived from dawn to dusk in gratitude to him.

It is not so that the more time, energy and resources we invest in our churches, the more Christian we are and the more pleased God is. We all know this is not true.

Churches becoming mini-kingdoms

Before we invest ever more of our resources in expanding our buildings and multiplying our ministries, we must ask ourselves some hard questions about expansion. When I look over the church scene in North America, I see an awful lot of churches that seem driven by an expansionist imperative. They're becoming mini-kingdoms, and the rest of us are taking them as models of success.

At the same time, there is the growing reality of believers who stop going to church, especially among young people. The sociologists and

psychologists among us come up with all sorts of reasons for this, and I am sure different folks have different reasons. One reason, however, may well be this expansionism, this excessive churchiness. How many of our young people at some point begin to feel that their lives are swallowed up by the church? Many speak of being raised in a ghetto. They may not be right, but there may be something right about this reaction to excessive churchiness.

When young people find themselves in a marginalized institution that's prosperous, pleased with itself, and happy with the world as it is, it's not surprising they begin to ask What's the point?

The point of the church, the point of redemption, is more political than it is ecclesiastical. It is more cultural and social than it is ecclesiastical. God sent his Son to proclaim the height and breadth of his Kingdom — that he is sovereign of all of life, all of society, all of history and politics.

This sounds extremely imperialistic in our day and age, when any talk of dominion and power has become suspect. But it is precisely the proclamation of God's absolute sovereignty that undermines all human aspirations to domination. At the same time, it also provides the ground for all human authority and office, in the state, in science and in business, but also in the church.

We cannot talk about leadership (office) in the church without painting the big picture of the sovereign God who has not surrendered creation to the thrall of principalities and powers but who enlists his people by the power of the Spirit to be the vanguard of liberation, renewal, enlightenment and new life in the Kingdom.

Pointing beyond church's boundaries

To perform this vanguard and eschatological function, the church does not need to expand its boundaries. Quite the contrary: it is by pointing beyond its boundaries, beyond itself and its limited competencies, that it faithfully discharges its office and mission. By proclaiming the truth that all power and authority is located elsewhere, beyond any single earthly power, and that God disperses authority and responsibility not just to church leaders but to leaders in every human activity, the church keeps leaders humble and in touch with the unity and source of life.

In its latest report on church office, the CRC rightly stressed the centrality of sacrifice and the awesome nature of leadership as representing the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but this needs to be supplemented by the proclamation of God's sovereignty and the church's relationship to the Spirit's leadership wherever human beings exert power to better their world.

We must not only lead people into the church, we must also lead them out of the church, for as one institution among others the church must be content to be no more than a temporary way station, a booth. Not a toll booth but a service station, replenishing us to journey elsewhere.

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News/Letters

Ontario PC urges his government to fund independent schools

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Many observers were surprised to see traditionally tight-fisted Tories in Ontario offer a tax break to the province's independent schools. But several members of Mike Harris's Progressive Conservative (PC) government, including Niagara South Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Tim Hudak, have been pushing for such a tax break for years.

Two years ago, in April 1999, Hudak showed his support for independent school funding by presenting a petition to the Ontario legislature calling for equity in education funding. The petition, which was signed by more than 200 people in the Niagara region, called on the Ontario government to "take immediate steps to extend fair funding to all students of the province." It argued that "providing our children with an excellent education consistent with our cultural



COURTESY TIM HUDAK'S OFFICE

Tim Hudak

using the public [or]

and religious beliefs is a necessity and not a matter of preference," and "all children of tax-paying Ontario parents deserve to have funding distributed in a manner that does not discriminate against those not Catholic systems."

Hudak urged funding of textbooks

In March 1999, Hudak wrote to then-Education Minister Dave Johnson, encouraging him to meet with members of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) to discuss the issue of independent school

funding. Hudak wrote, "I have had the opportunity to visit several Christian schools in Niagara and have come away very impressed. The staff, parents and students share a strong commitment to high standards in education at a very low per pupil cost. This commitment is reflected by the fact that the parents — many of modest means — pay property taxes to the public school system in addition to independent school tuition."

Lobbied for tax credit

At that time, OACS was asking the government to pay for the cost of textbooks for Christian schools, and Hudak wrote to support that request, which he stated "warrants serious consideration by your ministry to ensure that ... independent schools meet the high standards that we have come to expect [from] every school in Ontario."

This year, soon after representatives of

OACS and the Canadian Jewish Congress proposed the idea of a tuition tax credit to the Ontario legislature, Hudak and several of his PC colleagues lobbied the government to include the proposal in this year's budget. They succeeded. In a recent letter to supporters, Hudak wrote, "I congratulate parents, students, teachers, principals, and other supporters of Christian and independent schools on this achievement. The phone calls, letters, faxes and e-mails sent to Queen's Park helped raise awareness for parental choice in education among government members...."

He added, "The Mike Harris government recognizes the sacrifices made by hard working parents who want their children to be educated in an environment that reflects their religion and culture."

Of missionaries and tax credits

This past Sunday we had Pentecost, the day we remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. On this day our thoughts and prayers go out to the people we send out to bring the message of the risen Christ to the nations of the world. There was an offering to support the men and women in the field financially. Praise the Lord.

On the wall in the narthex of our church hangs a large poster from Christian Reformed World Missions, the names of our missionaries surrounding the poster. A sign that we as a church are reaching out into world.

Next to the poster stands a table; on it a petition to sign. It is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with regard to passing the budget bill giving tax credits to parents who send their children to independent schools.

The second line on this petition reads: ".... be it Christian, Muslim (Islam), Jew, Hindu, or another religion...."

Do we have to collaborate with other religions?

Yes, I read that right. Here in Ontario we put ourselves as Christians on the same level as these other religions. Only for the tax credits? Just for the money? Of course not. There must be justice too. For many years we have payed almost double for our children's education, it is no more than fair that we should see some return for our tax dollars.

But do we have to collaborate with the very people that persecute us? Here in Ontario, in Canada? Yes; very subtle, but it's there.

What about the poster and the missionaries, what do they have to do with this?

We send the missionaries out to people who are willing to die to get away from any of the above mentioned religions, which to us are heathen religions, to hear the Word of the Lord, to hear the message of love and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Not only that. We send monetary support (and prayer) to the faithful people who bring that Gospel into countries where Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism are dominant and where Christianity is not tolerated. In many, Christians are jailed for long periods of time, are tortured and put to death. The same missionaries whose names we so prominently display are themselves in "peril of the sword." Many have died because they would not relent in bringing the Good News to those who are suffering.

Can we be jointly associated with these same religions? I can't.

It is time we take a stand — a stand that we Christians are God's special people, who cannot go hand-in-hand with the same religions that persecute us. No, not even for the sake of money!

For all these years God has brought us this far without the government, and we will continue to go forth in faith. God has been faithful. He will continue to sustain us as we go on in faith to build and support Christian education.

Ralph Wolting
Chatham, Ontario

For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send it by fax to: (905)-682-8313, or by e-mail to: cceditor@aol.com

The dilemma of ministers' role on councils

Re: "Ministers still not permitted", CC June 25, p. 16, I appreciate David A. van der Woerd's article about ministers not being permitted to be a director of the church they serve. This affects the local church of which I am the clerk. We do not list the minister among our directors when we submit the list to the (Ont.) Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Neither do we permit our minister to be the chairperson of our council, which is also the Board of Directors.

However, that does not solve the dilemma of the minister's role in participating and voting on matters coming before council. I would very much appreciate some practical guidelines from Mr. van der Woerd on how to deal with this. Should we make an effort to separate the business aspects of the church from the ecclesiastical concerns? What is the best solution? Perhaps you can publish a follow-up article.

I will also write to the Canadian denominational headquarters (of the CRC) to see if they have any guidelines. Thanks.

John Hofstee
Listowel, Ont.

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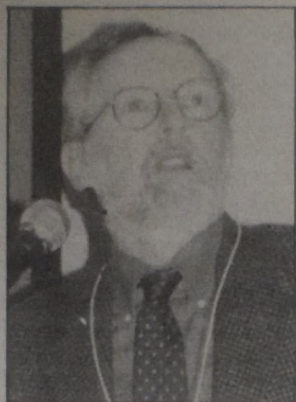
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Education

Faith-related colleges not inferior, says Marsden



Professor George Marsden

Marc C. Whitt

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP) — "The time has come to rethink the premise that the best education is secular and that religiously based education is automatically inferior," George Marsden said in an address during the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools' June 3-5 annual meeting in Lexington, Ky.

Marsden, professor of philosophy at Notre Dame University and formerly at Calvin College, said, "Religious colleges, instead of feeling that they are under pressure to become more like their secular counterparts, should take pride in the religious character of their education, attempting to strengthen it rather than weaken it.

"In our places of worship, [Americans] say their religion is not just for one day a week, but for all that we do," Marsden said. "Yet in most of their education, Americans send the message that when it comes to the really important things in life — what one should think about other people, society, politics, economics, careers, the environment, ourselves, our moral values, our nature and destiny — ... Americans teach their young people to think about them as though God did not exist."

Religion treated like 'harmless hobby'

Religion is typically treated like a "harmless hobby" in most of the nation's educational system, Marsden said. "At best, it is treated as an okay private hobby, perhaps like a chess club — something students might be encouraged to pursue on their own.

"Perhaps a college or university may even encourage voluntary religious organizations on campus," he continued. "But [religion] still is not regarded as something that relates to the more important things of life that we learn about. This is the case, I believe, even at

many church-related colleges.

"This trivialization of religion in education has a deeper implication ... that in large areas of life Americans are taught to act, despite our religious professions, as though God did not exist. That is at least the message that most Americans are willing to send to the next generation in our educational system."

Marsden contended that America's educational system got this way through scientific and democratic ideas that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century.

"These two ideas could be brought under the rubric of 'freedom,'" he said. "Science would involve free inquiry and democratic ideas would involve learning to live freely, to think and choose for oneself. Freedom is, of course, a wonderful idea, and we should value both these kinds of freedom — free scientific inquiry and freedom to choose one's own beliefs," Marsden said. "But like lots of good things, these good ideas were so valued to the exclusion of everything else that they led to distortions.

"One of those distortions, in my view, was that America's educators declared that the only first-rate education [is] education free from all religious direction or constraint. Such opposition to religious outlooks is institutionalized and is often directed toward religious schools."

Marsden said many educators in America have presumed that secular universities that revere science and personal freedom over religious influence are providing the best education.

These educators contend, "If religious colleges aspire to be regarded as truly first-class, they should drop their religious requirements or expectations and adopt educational standards like the [secular] universities," Marsden said.

"We are not talking just about strict fundamentalist creeds here," he noted, "but any requirement that faculty affirm the religious tradition of the school."

Marsden stated that "the time has come for our culture to be rethinking the role of religiously based colleges. Given the morally fragmented, technically oriented, careerist state of our major universities and their undergraduate colleges, why in the world should we think that they should be setting the standard for the best education and that religious colleges should be trying to catch up?"

Buyer's market for faculty

"True, most secular universities still have vastly more resources.

But what else do they have?" Marsden asked. "In these days of a perpetual buyer's market for faculty, many religious colleges, even of modest means, can have excellent faculties, at least if they are willing to commit resources to providing conditions to attract and keep the best Christian scholars."

Building a vision

"Building a vision around particular religious traditions often contributes to such colleges being better places to help produce morally responsible citizens than are giant universities," Marsden said.

"Perhaps the time has come when it is the secular universities

that should be thought of as second-class and urged to find some way to try to catch up qualitatively to what some of the religious colleges are doing," he noted. "Religious colleges, in the meantime, should not feel that they should have to apologize for their religious character. Rather, they should be building themselves up as models of an alternative higher education that others might want to emulate."

Marsden was one of two featured H.I. Hester Lecturers at the ASBCS annual meeting. The Hester Lectures' purpose is to bring Christian scholars to the annual meeting who, through the

lectures, will contribute to an understanding of the role of church-related higher education and to the mission of the Baptist-related institutions.

The Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools is a professional association whose membership includes administrations, staff and faculty of 48 colleges and universities, three Bible colleges and three academies. Based in Nashville, Tenn., the association is led by Bob Agee who serves as executive director. Georgetown (Ky.) College served as host institution for the Lexington meeting.

Profits and prophets

I worked for the investment company Nesbitt Burns for a short time. I remember my employer walking to his glistening new Jeep Cherokee, zapping on the lights and opening the rear door with some remote device, and then confiding to me: "Money can't buy happiness, Peter. But it makes misery a whole lot easier."

Money can't buy happiness. We all know it, we've all said it, and yet we keep trying. Money is not evil in itself, but the way we use it and configure our lives and institutions around it can betray a subtle evil that turns us from God and the command to love and towards a cold survivalist ethic.

"Lack of money is the root of all evil," said Mark Twain, putting a subtle twist on a text from Scripture. This seems to be the case in the university today, no doubt. Government funding is waning, tuition is rising, and corporate sponsorship of research is soaring. Fast food franchises dot the campus, pop companies buy monopolies for sales on campus, and men can't even go to the bathroom without coming face to face with an advertisement.

Labor negotiations are becoming more heated as professors claim they have to do more with less, and cheaper labor (contract, part-timers) are filling the course schedules.

A quiet revolution on campus

In the book he edits called *The Corporate Campus: Commercialization and the Dangers to Canada's Colleges and Universities* (2000), James Turk warns that "the basic role of universities in democratic societies is at risk. Alone among social institutions, the universities mission is the unqualified pursuit and public dissemination of knowledge and truth... This creates an uneasy relationship with the rest of society, especially with those in power who invariably want to harness the university to their wagon so that the university serves power and the status quo, not threatens it." Turk is publishing under the Canadian Association of University Teacher's Press, hoping to alert the public to this quiet revolution on their campuses.

The world is turning Private. A similar siren

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman



blares in Neil Tudiver's *Universities for Sale: Resisting Corporate Control Over Canadian Higher Education* (1999). Tudiver warns that materialistic values are overtaking the main purpose of education: to get people to think critically about the way the world is turning. Universities are run like businesses with a CEO as president rather than as communities of higher learning led by a first-class educator. "We risk placing too much faith in business and the market, abandoning our non-competitive institutions," he pleads. And "faith" is the right word, for these policies are driven by worldviews and lifestyles, not by fiscal certainties.

Almighty dollar

"Nobody knows how money works," an economics student once told me. He said that economics is all theories and models, and they all have different scholarly camps. "The system is too complex, and the future too uncertain for anything to be assured."

Behind every economic model and policy lies a moral compass, and many are skewed from the True North. It would be hyperbole to say that universities are becoming outposts of giant corporations, and professors the slaves of private interest. But I think we want our Christian children to be educated to creatively challenge the system rather than be trained to blindly fit in it, and it's getting harder to see the former in light of all the pressure to conform to the latter.

Big money is not making the university a happy place. If the university is to be faithful to its task, it must be motivated by a passion for wisdom. And that includes both fiscal stewardship and the untiring voice of the prophet, who speaks in the market without fear of losing a benefactor.



Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Arts/Media

Living in Dullsville and looking forward to the Picnic



SHAW FESTIVAL PHOTOS

Most of the characters in *Picnic* (above) are women.

Harry der Nederlanden

Two plays featured by the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, share some important themes. Both *Picnic* and *The Millionairess* are accessible and enjoyable plays, traditional theatre at its best and highly entertaining as well as thought-provoking. I won't attempt to review either performance, but I want to reflect on them for the view they both convey of "normal" society.

Picnic was written in 1953 by William Inge, one of the most successful American playwrights at the time. It is set in a small town in the American midwest, Kansas (not far from Iowa, I remind my wife, who was born and raised there). Inge was praised for his accurate portrayal of small-town America by the critics.

A matchmaking mom

Most of the characters in the play are women. A weary, uptight single mother is raising two teenage daughters in this little town, and her ambition is to see them become part of the respectable, prosperous class and blend into the routines of that life. The entire drama is played out on the back veranda and backyard of the clapboard two-story house.

Mom is anxious to make a match between her oldest, Madge, who is the town beauty, and the college-educated son of one of the town's wealthiest families. Although he's a solid, likeable fellow, Madge isn't really excited by him and, although she dutifully goes out with him, her lack of enthusiasm shows. The other daughter is a bit of a tomboy, on the verge of womanhood. Her lively presence poses the question: will

she too be pressed into a colorless future that provides no room for her natural vitality?

Also living in the house upstairs as a boarder is a single schoolmarm, Rosemary, who feels the years passing by ("spinster" was the old word). She is visited by two fellow teachers, also single, proper schoolmarms who are very aware of the community's eyes on them. They live their lives dutifully, joylessly, without prospect of any great fulfilment, within the narrow confines of their position in this small town. Rosemary dreads the end of another summer and the beginning of another school year of repeating the same routines. The owner of the local hardware store has been dating her for several years, but shows no signs of proposing, and she is growing desperate for a change in her life.

Next door lives a middle-aged woman, also single, saddled with the care of a needy, aging mother. She is a bit raw and naughty, obviously feeling the lack of male company. She's entirely proper, mind you, but she longs for the excitement that sexual difference introduces into life, and she takes in a drifter, Hal, to do some chores around the house.

A zest for life

Hal is a loud, physical, self-flaunting, fun-loving, windy character filled with a zest for life, bursting with animal vitality. When he struts into the backyard, shirtless, the staid, rutted lives of the characters are thrown into turmoil. His vitality and gusto exposes the lives of the other characters for the dull, passionless, repressed lives they are.

At the same time, he also

awakens deep animal passions and longings for more, for a life of greater passion, in the women, especially in the school teacher and Madge, who falls in love with him. The town, however, represented by the son of the rich man, brands him as a dangerous outsider and he is forced to flee, an outlaw.

The play is clearly under the spell of the Freudian view of human nature; Freudianism saw morality and order

as a veneer of reason imposed on animal desires. Like many artists of the early twentieth century, Inge used his art to plead for the liberation of the natural vitalities of human desire from the strictures of small-town morality, often equated with Christianity.

Force of nature

In *The Millionairess* by Bernard Shaw, the central character is also a person of boundless energy and will, someone who pays little or no attention to the restrictive moralities of middle-class society. Taunted that she is nothing more than the spoiled child of privilege — she is the daughter of a millionaire — she charges off in several directions at once to show what she can do.

In one scene, she bursts into a small sweat shop producing

dowdy coats and dresses and in a fortnight transforms it into a prosperous, booming business. The same happens to a family hotel that hasn't changed in years. She is a force of nature, a transforming dynamo, without which life would go on ploddingly, stupidly, spiritlessly following along in the same old rut.

Shaw's play shows that without this almost lawless source of energy, life would be dreary and dull, but at the same time he also realizes that it can be a dangerous force that eats up the common people.

This pattern, this way of seeing "normal" civilized, moral — often called bourgeois or middle-class — existence as by its very nature repressive and deadening is hardly unique to Inge and Shaw. It appears in many generations of novels, plays and movies.

Not a Christian view

It is clearly not a Christian view of life. A Christian will not buy into a worldview that asserts that what is wrong with human life is that it has been pressed into the deadening molds of duty, morality, marriage and family obligation; that what we need is to tap into those deeper, primal levels of animal energy to renew and revitalize human life and open it up to new possibilities and joys.

The recent film *Chocolat*, in which the citizens of a small French town, symbolically under the discipline of Lent, are liberated by the sensuality of eating chocolate, the sacrament of the awakened body, draws on a similar worldview.

But the list of works is endless. So the Shaw Festival Theatre and countless novels and films become the — very effective and attractive —

pulpits for this pagan worldview. And Christians like myself, like you and my children, pay good money to be indoctrinated by this false worldview. What chance does the local pastor have against such talented and seductive media? If he goes past his half-hour allotment, the people begin to murmur like the Israelites under Moses. For *Picnic* and *The Millionairess* we sat rapt, mesmerized, for over two hours each.

God speaks through plays, too

Christians often worry about the influence of the arts and media, frequently focussing on profanity and nudity. Yet, despite the pervasive and overpowering presence of these extremely seductive stories, the church is still here. And it still recognizes the shepherd's voice.

One of the reasons, I'm sure, is that even in and through these plays and stories God speaks. There is, indeed, a great deal in the lives, even in the steady, moral lives we create with and for one another, that is deadening, stifling. The fact that playwrights and artists can recognize that and can spark us to dream of a fuller, more vital, more bodily whole existence is nothing less than living proof that they are made in the image of God. Despite their pagan ideologies, they too feel the push and tug of the Holy Spirit pushing and tugging us toward the Source of Life who renews our desires and deepens our appetite for the new heaven and the new earth.

Much of the time, perhaps, we do live in Dullsville, but we may look forward to the Picnic; in fact, the church invites us to celebrate the feast already and to see this world as his theatre.



Sarah Orenstein (left), as Epifania, the main character of Bernard Shaw's *The Millionairess*.

Church

Putting a 'human face' on globalization

GENOA, Italy (Zenit.org) — Economies cannot be measured solely by the logic of supply and demand, said a speaker at a weekend congress to produce proposals for the upcoming G-8 summit, to be held in Genoa July 18-21.

The meeting hoped its efforts help give a "human face to globalization."

Entitled "Toward a United World through Globalization in Solidarity," the conference drew 1,000 participants. New Humanity, a Catholic group inspired by the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, hosted the event.

Some anti-globalization movements are planning to protest the meeting of representatives of the seven major industrialized nations and Russia.

Positive options for summit to consider

To give positive options for the summit to consider, the weekend conference produced a "Genoa Document," which contained proposals for making economies more humane.

During the event, University of Padua professor Benedetto Gui said the simple logic of supply-and-demand isn't adequate for measuring an economy. Hence, the Genoa Document proposed the concept of "communion," in the sense of universal and complete participation in the economic system. Gui said the idea is ambitious, "Yet, applicable and fascinating."

Lorna Gold, of New York University, said the idea of "the economy of communion" arose in the context of increased internationalization of human relations. Focolare founder Chiara Lubich coined the expression. The idea is based on the principle that the



FOCOLARE

Focolare founder Chiara Lubich (above) coined the expression "the economy of communion."

human family has one Father, and thus the network of solidarity goes beyond the limits of local communities.

The "economy of communion" has already been applied at the international level, especially in Africa. It has created new forms of business management, such as the three-part subdivision of earnings, where one part is allocated to the poor, another to financing the "culture of giving," and the third to re-investment in the business.

Rigorous ethical standards

Likewise, the project calls for rigorous ethical standards in all aspects of business life.

In speaking of the "culture of giving," the project describes the financing of small model neighborhoods, publishing houses and formation centres. The formation centres are also considered valuable in the struggle against the spread of AIDS.

The approach has Catholic

roots, but its basic lines are widely shared by the World Council of Churches.

Not enough to cancel debt

Freddy Knutsen, the WCC representative, emphasized the need to free poor countries, and those impoverished by globalization, from the "slavery" of debt. But it is not enough to cancel the debt, he said. Rather, he called for a transformation of the system, which he said allows some countries to be poor and even worsens their debt.

The conference also proposed the so-called Tobin tax as a way to reduce speculation in foreign-exchange transactions. (This proposal would tax currency transactions on foreign exchange markets at a rate of 0.1 to 0.25 per cent and use the revenue for basic environmental and human needs.) The tax has the support of the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Focolare Movement, Pax Christi International and nongovernmental organizations such as Halifax, Initiative and Kayros-Europe.

Anja Osterhaus of Kayros-Europe said that agents often buy and sell the same day, in order to obtain earnings resulting from variations of quotations, even if the latter are very small.

The 0.1 per cent Tobin tax could noticeably reduce these types of speculative transactions — which can amount to \$1.5 billion a day — given that the levy in many cases would be higher than the expected profit, Osterhaus said. Another benefit is that the tax would create a fund for those less favored by globalization.

and programs.

Germany's churches remain the biggest contributors to the LWF, accounting for more than 35 per cent of the federation's budget. Other major contributors are churches in Sweden, the United States, Norway and Finland.

Unhindered access to holy sites

Bishop Christian Krause, president of the LWF, called for unhindered access to holy sites in the Middle East and freedom of movement for both the people of Israel and the occupied territories.

Chinese officials send 12 Protestants to labor camp

China (Newsroom) — Twelve Chinese Protestants arrested last month at an unregistered church meeting have been sent to a labor camp in northern China, a Hong Kong-based human rights monitor reported.

The Christians were sentenced without trial to between two and three years of "re-education through labor" for "illegal religious activities," according to the Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy. Police have the authority to administer the "re-education" sentence without trial for up to three years, and many religious leaders in China have been sent to labor camps amid the communist government's crackdown on unregistered groups.

Police broke up meeting

The 12 were among a group of 35 Christians arrested on May 26 during a service at a house in Dongsheng, a northern Chinese city. The meeting reportedly was broken up by about 30 police. The others were released one day later after paying a fine.

The Hong Kong centre said one of the group's leaders, Wang Yulan, was given a three-year sentence.

China's communist regime requires all religious groups to be registered with the government. Protestants are required to join the state-controlled Three-self Patriotic Movement, but the majority of church leaders refuse because of restrictions placed on doctrine and practice. China has about 75 million Protestants, according to some western scholars. About 15 million Chinese attend Three-self churches.

China expands crackdown

Over the past year China has expanded its crackdown on unregistered religious activities, human rights groups say. The *Washington Post* reported recently that Chinese authorities have launched a campaign on one of the most significant centres of Buddhist teaching in China. The centre, in western Sichuan province, is described as a "spontaneous Buddhist encampment" started by a charismatic Tibetan priest. Authorities have knocked down housing for monks and nuns, forcing thousands of followers to leave, the *Post* said. On Thursday, at a gathering in front of the Chinese consulate in New York City, supporters of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement accused the Chinese government of a large-scale effort to cover up the murder and abuse of practitioners. James Li, a U.S. citizen living in Pennsylvania, told reporters that his brother, Li Baifan, was killed in a re-education labor camp for refusing to renounce his practice of Falun Gong.

The Falun Dafa Information Center in New York says 228 people have died as a result of police torture and brutality since the crackdown began two years ago. A spokesman for the centre, Adam Montanaro told Newsroom he believes the situation is getting worse. "In the last two months we've seen an incredible escalation of the severity of the torture and the time between when somebody is taken in and the time that they come back out in the mortuary." He cited 20 cases in the last month that the New York centre has documented so far, twice as many as in May.

Montanaro noted that last month the Chinese government labeled Falun Gong a "counter-revolutionary political organization and political power," which allows authorities to administer even stricter punishment to practitioners.

Church growth poses challenge to LWF, says treasurer

GENEVA, Switzerland (ENI) — An increase in the number of Lutheran churches outside Europe and North America is producing a special challenge for the Lutheran World Federation, according to a LWF financial official. The LWF council, the organisation's governing body, was meeting near Geneva in mid-June.

The federation has more than 130 member churches in more than 70 countries.

Church membership is growing in areas experiencing economic hardship, said Inger Johanne Wremer, LWF treasurer. The

federation needs to support these "vulnerable, but very enthusiastic" new churches, but "not do it in a way that takes away their self-reliance," she said.

Listen to young churches

The LWF should listen to the young churches and help them to become self-supporting.

In the past year, she said, there had been a decrease both in membership contributions and in grants received by the LWF from churches, church-related organizations and governmental organizations for specific projects

The annual meeting of the council was originally to have taken place in Bethlehem and Jerusalem and was relocated to Switzerland because of violence in the Holy Land.

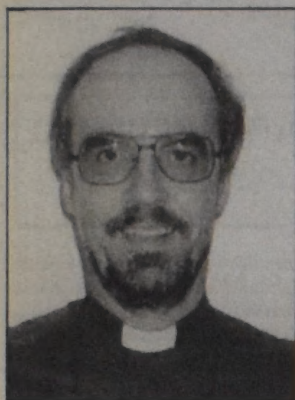
The Lutheran bishop of Jordan and Palestine Munib Younan called upon churches world-wide to undertake a "plan of action" to save the church in the Holy Land.

With a continuous presence in

the Holy Land for 2000 years, today's Christians represented less than two per cent of the total population in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, the bishop said. But their numbers are decreasing due to emigration caused by political instability in the region "especially [among] the young people, who are our future."

Church

Canada's conservative Anglicans meet to promote 'orthodoxy'



ANGLICANESSENTIALS.ORG PHOTOS

Suffragan Bishop of Europe, Henry Scriven.

Ferdy Baglo

LANGLEY, B. C. (ENI) — As more than 650 conservative members of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) met here June 14 to 19, a leading conservative described the ACC as "a church in trouble".

The meeting took place under the auspices of Anglican Essentials (AE), a movement which is "pressing the church towards Christian orthodoxy". The comment was made in a video by Dr. Harry Robinson, member of the AE's executive committee, who also said that there was a "religious melt-down in the global community".

Robinson's brother, Thomas Robinson, a clergyman and member of the AE Council, told ENI: "We want to talk very much in positive terms of who and what the Anglican Church is and to simply identify a body of orthodox evangelical Anglicans who are concerned that the ACC not go

off course."

Thomas Robinson, national co-ordinator for Barnabas Anglican Ministries (BAM), which is part of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, said in his interview with ENI: "There have been significant movements in the course of the past 20 years particularly to change the way we think and the way we worship and even the way we believe. The Prayer Book Society, for example, stands for what we have always said and done and believed."

Attending and addressing the conference were several international guests also opposed to liberalism within world-wide Anglicanism. They included Archbishop Ping Chung Yong from Malaysia; the Suffragan Bishop of Europe, Henry Scriven; Bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon of Nigeria; and Peter Moore, president of Trinity Episcopal School of Ministries in Pennsylvania, U.S.

The conference consisted of numerous workshops, worship services and discussion groups



Bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon of Nigeria.

relating to the theme "Lift High the Cross".

Outside observers were expecting the issue of homosexuality, which is a cause of division between liberals and conservatives in many Anglican provinces, to be a key subject here, especially as the conference took place in the Greater Vancouver Diocese, con-

Communion in the shadows

Alex Buchan

"I have discovered that if you really want to follow Jesus, there comes a point where you must love others more than your church allows you to," whispered the young priest.

In a certain city in Russia (you'll see why I have to be vague later on), I attended an Orthodox service after enjoying a very congenial chat with the bishop. The service was everything an evangelical loves yet rarely experiences — exotic smells, solemn contemplative singing and a service breathtaking in its breadth, seeming to encompass the entire history of the Christian faith and involving every Christian, dead or alive. Deeply moved, I joined the line to receive communion.

'How dare you...!'

The bishop spotted me and made straight for me. Grabbing my arm, he pulled me out of the line, hissing in a fierce undertone that echoed off the golden dome: "You are not Orthodox; how dare you attempt to receive communion!"

A few onlookers gave me sympathetic glances, but no one dared defy the bishop. After all, he was quite within his "doctrinal" right to refuse me communion. I retreated to the darkest patch of the church I could find, and began to slip away, vowing never to enter another Orthodox church as long as I lived.

As I eased out, my arm was pulled by a younger priest. He said, "I am ashamed of my bishop for what he did in there, but I cannot openly defy him. Here." And, with a hint of furtiveness, he passed me a piece of the consecrated bread.

"You could get defrocked for this," I said.

He replied with a fierce intensity I was coming to recognize as quintessentially Russian, "I have discovered that if you really want to follow Jesus, there comes a time when you must love others more than your church allows you to."

Later we met and he expanded on this point. "I think individuals learn more from persecution than churches do. It's like back in the

considered to be one of the most liberal-leaning dioceses in Canada. Only six weeks ago, the diocese narrowly voted to permit the blessing of same-sex couples. However, Bishop Michael Ingham withheld authorization on the grounds that the vote was too narrow and that the subject may well be addressed at the ACC's General Synod

meeting in Waterloo, Ontario, next month.

Asked by ENI about the issue, Robinson said that outsiders "thought it was going to be a major part [of discussion] but the truth of the matter [is] it wasn't. [Rather the aim] was to affirm who and what we are as Anglican Christians."

outward looking?"

He thought for a bit, then said, "You must always make a distinction between the individual and the institution. When persecution comes, it's the people — the individuals — that are changed. But churches — the institutions — they just concentrate on surviving, and so they do not grow at all. So persecution results in a very odd situation, where the people learn more of God than their so-called shepherds, where humble babushkas (grandmothers) gain greater wisdom than bishops and patriarchs."

You can see why I have to keep this location secret. Reflecting on persecution has made this priest an ecclesiastical subversive of the first order. But his truth must not remain a secret.

In China, a famous evangelist, Wang Ming Dao, also twigged this truth when he said, "In a time of persecution, you can save the church at the expense of the faith, or the faith at the expense of the church."

Acts of the Apostles. It took persecution for the apostles to realize the gospel was for Gentiles also. The initial church of Jerusalem had no desire to take the gospel to Gentiles, and it seems that its leader — James of Jerusalem — was never fully convinced of the need to do so.

"Certainly it is Antioch that becomes the main sending community from then on, not Jerusalem. I think every Christian will reach a point in their spiritual life when to truly reach out with the gospel to another person, they have to eventually defy their church to do so, because there is something about a church that just wants to keep God to itself.

"We Russian Orthodox — to our shame — are only interested in Russians. We have not taken the gospel convincingly to any ethnic minorities, and now we expend great energy in refusing opportunities to Western evangelicals to preach here."

I couldn't resist raising an obvious objection, "But your church has been persecuted these past 70 years, so why has the persecution not caused it to become

'Abolish the Church,' says former bishop in UK

(Religion Today) — The Church of England should be abolished, according to David Jenkins, the controversial former Bishop of Durham. In his autobiography, *A Cuckoo in the Nest*, due out next year, Jenkins claims the church is out-of-date, out-of-touch and needs to be dismantled.

"I would like to see its disappearance," he says. "The church is not getting to grips with the issues of today. People are realizing that there is no case for an established church. Let's say that the Christian churches should get together in a federation, and the Church of England can just disappear into that. At

the moment we're anchored to out-of-date structures with roots in medieval times."

Jenkins was a hero to some when he criticized the Thatcher government in the 1980s, but a hate figure to those who clung to the view that the Church of England was supposed to be "the Conservative Party at prayer." Lord Hailsham was typical of the traditional Anglican Tories who lined up to denounce him. "I much prefer the word of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John," he said. "They were there, and David Jenkins wasn't."

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News/Agriculture

Montreal Seafarers Centre opens in new facilities

Lloyd Burghart

MONTREAL — A crowd numbering about 300 people gathered to watch and listen as Dominic Taddeo, president of the Port of Montreal, cut the ribbon, officially opening the newly renovated and expanded Montreal Seafarers' Club on Pier 3 in the Old Port of Montreal. This event took place on Tuesday, June 12, 2001.

It marked the culmination of talks begun in 1996 by the Rev. Michael Winnowski, Chaplain/Director of The Seafarers Centre (The Ministry to Seafarers of the Christian Reformed Church), the Rev. Fr. Guy Bouille, Port Chaplain for the Apostleship of the Sea (Roman Catholic), and the Rev. Fr. Brian Evans, also a Port Chaplain for the Mission to Seafarers (Anglican Church). These three chaplains agreed to work in ecumenical partnership and encouraged the first joint meeting of the boards of The Ministry to Seafarers and the Mariner's House.

New era of co-operation

Six years later, the ribbon cutting and the dedication service of the new chapel, led by the current port chaplains, the Rev. Lloyd Burghart (CRC), the Rev. Fr. Alfred Chinniah (Anglican), the Rev. Fr. Claude Forest, (Roman Catholic), and Michelle De Pooter, assistant CRC chaplain marked the beginning of a new era of co-operation in port ministry.

For the past two years, the Board of Seaway Ministries which oversees the Ministry to Seafarers has worked very hard to convince the two supporting classes, Eastern Canada and Quinte, as well as the many donors across North

America, that it was in the best interest of the ministry to enter into this partnership with the Mariner's House. Harbor conditions have changed since The Seafarers Centre first opened about 16 years ago. Ships are bigger; crews are smaller; and stays in port are shorter. The reduced number of seafarers no longer justifies the need to maintain two separate and independent port ministries.

Thanks to a grant of nearly \$200,000 from the Seafarers Trust of the ITF (International Transportworkers Federation in London, UK), the renovation and expansion of the Mariner's House became possible. This meant that The Seafarers Centre could close. From then on, there would be only one seafarers club in Montreal.

Chaplains can focus on their calling

The partnering arrangement has already resulted in allowing our chaplains to work as they were called to do, as ministers to seafarers, rather than as administrators of a centre. The Mariner's House board of directors operates the basically secular centre. The three chaplaincies do the work of ministry in the name of Jesus to the seafarers. Each chaplaincy is supervised and supported by its own denomination, so the Ministry to Seafarers of the Christian Reformed Church still exists, with its chaplains visiting ships and volunteers assisting at the centre.

At the regular meeting of the Board of Seaway Ministries on Wednesday, June 13, a name change proposal from the board of directors of the Mariner's House was approved. The new name: Montreal Seafarers Centre (Centre

des Marins de Montreal).

Does the Lord's work still get done in Montreal? Of course. As

long as the chaplains are faithful in following their Lord, the Lord has promised that he will guide and

bless their work. Ask the volunteers who continue to come to help.

Government prefers numbers over people

We are told that the federal government is about to make over farming in Canada. The number crunchers in Ottawa have convinced the politicians that farms ought to be very large, commercial, high-tech places supplying "reputation" niche products. The politicians, in turn, can't seem to resist the temptation to make a big splash in a small but complex pond where they have little understanding or accountability.

Ottawa, instead of making "pronouncements about farming, should legislate for contentment on the farm. Some say that farmers will always complain. If that is so, then there is a reason for it and governments may be partly to blame.

Farmers will be content with an income that allows them to farm and to pass the farm on to the next generation. People who love to farm (or ranch) will work hard and stick with it through considerable difficulty.

The Feds also want to see farms independent of any subsidies in the future. So do farmers, for that matter. Ironically, the greatest benefactors of subsidies are the one-third of farmers who have the largest farms — those the government wants other farmers to emulate. Direct subsidies are not the way to go. However, genuine assistance to farmers for the purpose of maintaining a robust agriculture makes good sense.

As a civil servant some years ago, I was part of a meeting to discuss the continuation of a government subsidy to livestock producers for buying registered purebred sires for their herds.

Our supervisor took a poll around the table. Responses ranged from "we should phase it out this year" to "get rid of it right away" to "we should have removed it by now". Advocates of the policy felt that intervention had greatly improved the quality of livestock in Alberta. Others disagreed. For one thing, purity of breed and quality of sire was not guaranteed. Furthermore, the subsidy went into the pockets of sire sellers who upped the price of sire by the amount of subsidy. Tighter regulation of registration of animals and good extension education by livestock supervisors would have been a more effective investment by government.

Government out of its depth

The Chretien administration is out of its depth pushing for changes in on-farm decisions. Essentially, what the government is touting is more of the old "bigger is better" philosophy, at best a narrow idea far removed from the reality that agriculture is a highly complex interaction of many factors, some of them out of human control.

Governments would do well to examine how they are hampering agriculture from achieving stability and long-term production capability. What about the wind-eroded soil that was blackening skies this spring? That was not merely the result of prolonged drought, but the result of desperate practices farmers have felt forced to employ in order to survive one more season.

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE

What about the indiscriminate spread of cities and country residential development over many square miles of fertile countryside every year, greatly reducing food production capacity?

What about the obsequious prime minister of Canada and premier of Alberta madly exporting fuel and electricity to the United States and in the process jeopardizing the survival of businesses here?

Government should regulate quality of food

The government should again pick up its responsibility to regulate the quality of food. The book *Hard to Swallow* documents the fact that the federal government has turned over both testing and regulation of food products to the companies that produce and market them. Farmers now pay for the grading of beef, for instance, which is done by the packing companies. No longer is the quality of that product directly guarded by the government of Canada.

Testing of the effect of various new products to be used on the farm should again be done by federal agencies. University research should again receive adequate independent research funding in order to achieve unbiased results.

There are farm assistance policies the government can adopt which will promote viable agriculture and at the same time allow for utilizing the latest technology. That can be as simple as providing trees for the planting of shelterbelts. It can be the facilitating of the orderly marketing of farm goods for the stabilization of production without requiring government finances.

Though governments ought not to be making farming decisions, they should be assisting in the creation of a favorable climate for farming. That may require rolling back legislation such as Canada's participation in NAFTA so that Canada can be more in control of its own destiny. Farmers in general would be willing to co-operate by working long hours and investing in the technology necessary — if they could be certain of producing crops for which there are markets and returns enough to stay in business. Government schemes seldom take into account the morale of the farmer. When morale is gone, farmers will quit. Agriculture will become mainly commercial and controlled by foreign interests on extensive holdings. The people who till the soil will no longer be those who cherish the soil and what grows or grazes there. Food costs will soar.

People are a vital part of the formula for viable agriculture. May the people in Ottawa understand that.

Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alta.



Current harbor chaplain Rev. Lloyd Burghart and his wife, Karin, the administrator of the Ministry to Seafarers.

PHOTOS COURTESY THE SEAFARERS CENTRE



Synod News

CRC Synod 2001 expands office of evangelist

Harry der Nederlanden

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — CRC Synod 2001 was one of the shortest in living memory. It has been only a few years since synod was downsized from its two-week marathons, and this year it finished on Thursday afternoon, a day early.

This was in part because delegates had to work their way through only one study report — on ordination and 'official acts of ministry' — and it is one that has not raised a great deal of controversy. The purpose of the report and its recommendations was to do some necessary restructuring to provide a formal way for the church to accommodate specialized ministries, team ministries, people in ministry with different kinds of training and churches that cannot afford a fulltime pastor, especially in Classis Red Mesa.

The chairman of synod, Morris Greidanus, also deserves some credit; he kept discussions from getting bogged down, and he quipped defused any tensions with his good humor.

Wit and laughter, graciousness and skill

Humor is probably one of the underrated gifts in church government, but it makes an important, sometimes even indispensable, contribution. This year, as well as last, synod was conducted with a great deal of wit and laughter — as well as discipline, graciousness and skill. This does not detract from the seriousness and spirituality of its deliberations. In fact, in most cases, I'm convinced, it contributes to a better sense of proportion. A synod that laughs is more aware that even as we plan the future direction of the church's mission, we are frail, fallible, limited creatures and that we will make mistakes, but God will not abandon us for that.

The church goes forward knowing that it needs correction, that it depends on forgiveness and that ultimately the church's mission is the work of the Holy Spirit. Knowing this, the church can be more relaxed about its pronouncements and decisions, and it can even laugh once in a while.

More relaxed attitude

This more relaxed attitude was especially evident this year. I think, in synod's deliberations on the ordination report. Several different speakers reminded the delegates that the church was feeling its way here into new territory and that nothing was being written in stone. Undoubtedly future synods will have to make adjustments and



Serguei Sossedkine, candidate for ministry from Russia, greets delegates after being presented to Synod.

get out some of the kinks that will show up in practice. In the past, synods often sought to pronounce if not the last word certainly the penultimate.

The reporter for the advisory committee on ordination admitted that when it met, there was little consensus and a great deal of confusion about the report; they were "all over the place." However, much of this was cleared up, he said, after Clayton Libolt, the reporter for the study committee, led them through it, so Libolt was invited to do the same thing for synod as a whole. And he did so — brilliantly, stressing its central themes.

It's not first of all about gifts or talents of individuals, he emphasized, but about gifts given by Jesus Christ to the church. These gifts are given to the church to enable it to be a nation of priests. "Our power is in our sacrificial acts," he said, summing up one of the main themes of the report. For this, Christ gives us leaders who are called to (re) present Christ to the community and to bring the cares and concerns of the congregation to God.

Among the gifts given to the church are certain ceremonies — acts of ministry — that symbolize the church's ministry in the name of Christ. "These acts are so fraught with spiritual meaning that they are hemmed about with safeguards," contended Libolt. Yet, these are not gifts to individuals or to an office but to the church, to the congregation. So, in cases where a church cannot afford to pay an ordained pastor, council should be able to appoint someone else from the congregation to perform these symbolic acts vital to the functioning of the church.

I've boiled down a half hour of eloquence into a few lines here and can't really do Libolt or the report

justice. It was as much sermon as analysis, as much inspiration as theoretical framework for the recommendations adopted by synod. Libolt did emphasize that synod was not being asked to adopt the report in toto, but just the recommendations flowing out of it.

As the delegates moved through the report one recommendation at a time, however, they stalled at several points, asking careful questions about just how the report was depicting the offices of the church. It was not always easy to keep the unifying vision in view. At one point, some detected a congregationalist viewpoint, that is, the idea that only the local church is truly church and not the broader assemblies. At another point, in describing the so-called "acts of ministry", some wondered whether we weren't flirting with sacramentalism.

Greater flexibility

But Libolt and George Vink, chair of the advisory committee, kept pointing out that each recommendation had to be taken as part of a larger whole. Several stabs were made at introducing amendments but most were found inferior to what was already on paper, and in the end synod adopted in substance what was put before it.

By adopting these recommendations, synod introduced greater flexibility into who can perform such symbolic acts as administer the sacraments, pronounce the blessing, etc., loosely defined as "acts of ministry", but it by no means threw things wide open. Now a consistory may appoint someone other than a pastor to do this, but this process will be closely supervised by classis.

Synod detached ordination from the traditional path of the seminary and extended it to those engaged in specialized ministries

and not specifically trained as minister of the Word, but these will not automatically be ordained. To be ordained, one must be called to "pastoral leadership". "Ordination is not a way of recognizing a person's academic credentials," synod declared, but of recognizing and enacting "a pastoral relationship between Christ and the church, mediated in a certain leader."

The stress on the "awesome-ness" of the acts of ministry in the report is to preserve them only for the central or basic ministries of the church, and ordination follows in the same footsteps. "These acts of ministry symbolize and strengthen the relationships among the Lord, leaders, and the people of God," synod said, and their use is "a sacred trust given to leaders by the Lord for the purpose of strengthening the flock."

At the same time, however, synod expanded the relatively new office of evangelist to embrace a variety of ministry positions, such as chaplain, pastor of education, youth pastor, minister of congregational life, etc. Although such "evangelists" will be enabled to do many of the things a "regular" pastor does, his or her credentials will be confined to a classis and his work will be subject to supervision in ways that a pastor's is not.

When I talked with delegates afterward, several expressed misgivings about the moves, although they had approved them, because they were not at all sure of how they would work out in practice. Had they opened the gate so wide that persons might be ordained for almost any function in the church? Is the church going to be able to maintain high standards of training for its leaders? Yet, most of them felt enough trust that future assemblies could address any problems that might arise.

Four female candidates for ministry approved

Among other actions, synod: — approved 22 candidates for ministry who graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary this year. Candidates include students from Cuba, Netherlands, Russia, Canada and the United States. Four of the candidates are women. Candidates were voted for individually rather than as a block, to allow delegates to vote their consciences regarding the female candidates.

— allowed seven individuals into ministry in the CRC through Article 7. Article 7 allows individuals who are considered specially gifted to be ordained in the Christian Reformed Church, even if

they have not attended a seminary or completed a theological education.

— gave 13 churches the right to call ministers through Article 8, and gave 19 pastors the right to enter the denomination through Article 8. Church Order Article 8 allows ministers from other denominations to enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

'Tremendous victory for God'

— voted to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with sister denominations in South Africa and Cuba. Rev. Norman Steen said the opportunity to form ties with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa is "a tremendous victory for God." The 1.5-million member DRC had sought ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church since 1978, but was rebuffed over its support for apartheid. In 1998 the DRC repudiated apartheid as fundamentally wrong and sinful, thus opening the way for fellowship.

Delegates also voted to create formal ties with the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba. World Missions, Calvin seminary and a number of Canadian and U.S. congregations have been working with the Cuban churches for a number of years. Synod also asked the Interchurch Relations Committee to start exploring the possibility of renewed fellowship with the Protestant Reformed Church, which separated from the CRC in the 1920s because of deep theological differences over the issue of God's common grace.

— reaffirmed its commitment today to the denomination's smaller, struggling churches by making it possible for some of them to qualify as heritage churches. Heritage church status means financial support from the classis and the denomination. A heritage church, according to John Rozeboom, executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions, is a small church that's been around a long time, ministers in an isolated area and whose ministry and vocation are recognised as valid by the classis.

— urged churches to use resources from CRC Publications for their ministries. Synod said it is especially important "that the uniqueness of the Reformed interpretation of Scripture be integrated into the curriculum offered to the children and youth of our churches."

— established a committee to study church education. It said the vision for church education seems to have decreased significantly,

See CRC SYNOD page 12...

Denominational News

U.S. Presbyterians prepare for more debate on homosexual ordinations

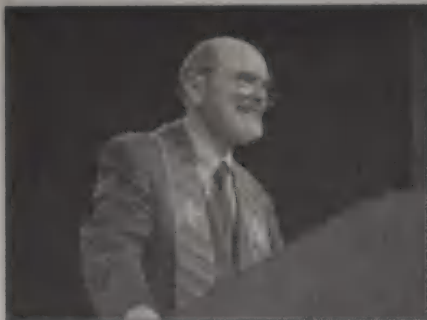
Chris Herlinger

NEW YORK, (INI)—The Presbyterian Church (USA), the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S., is preparing for the next step in a long-running debate over the ordination of openly gay and lesbian clergy.

Ban on ordaining gays

The denomination's general assembly in Louisville, Kentucky, voted to overturn a ban on ordaining gay and lesbian clergy—a decision that must now be considered by the denomination's 173 presbyteries, the church's local legislative bodies.

The vote overturns a 1997 resolution that required ordained ministers, as well as church deacons and elders, to adhere to "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness." The vote also signalled renewed strength for the liberal and moderate wing of



Jack Rogers, the PCUSA general assembly's moderator.

the denomination, though conservatives said they would work hard to keep the 1997 resolution in place.

Issue could split church

At a news conference at the end of the assembly, conservatives said they were disappointed and predicted the issue could yet

formally split the church.

Asked about a possible division or schism within the denomination, Russ Ritchel Jr., a North Carolina minister, said the split already existed in all but name. "It's like we're in a British comedy where we are all handcuffed together. We are handcuffed together by our [church]

property," he said.

Jerry Andrews, a spokesman for one of the conservative activist groups, the Presbyterian Coalition, predicted the vote by the local presbyteries would support maintaining the ban. The presbyteries overwhelmingly voted to keep the ban in place when they voted on the issue in 1997. "There will be a

better reflection of reality in the presbytery votes," he said.

Liberals hailed the decision, saying the vote reaffirmed the church's principle of allowing local churches and presbyteries to take decisions about ordination. They also said the vote represented a growing consensus within the church about the issue of ordination following several years of grass-roots activism by church liberals.

Another victory for liberals and moderates was the election of Jack Rogers as the general assembly's moderator. Rogers, aged 67, has taught at both conservative and liberal seminaries, including, most recently, the denomination's San Francisco Theological Seminary. Rogers is also a member of the board of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, a group which supports the ordination of gay clergy.

Following his election as moderator, which makes him

denominational spokesman for a year, Rogers spoke of the need for the church to survive what it called its "Presbyterian civil war."

Though his election as moderator was not welcomed by conservatives, Rogers said it was his hope the church could remain united despite the divisions over gay ordination.

Gay ordination and scriptural interpretation have in recent years caused division within the 2.5 million-member denomination.

Rogers said he was committed to keeping the denomination united. To that end, the general assembly adopted, by an overwhelming 467-41 vote, the creation of a 17-member "spiritual discernment" task force that will study ordination standards, Christology, and biblical authority and interpretation, and try to find common ground among conservatives and liberals.

Reformed Church in America struggles with pastor shortage



Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

PELLA, Iowa — "Mission is our denominational story," said the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson in his general secretary's report to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America which met June 8-13, 2001, on the campus of Central College in Pella, Iowa. "Mission now is everywhere, all around us, not just 'over there.'"

"We have begun to embrace, in every region of the church, what it means for congregations to become 'missional'. No longer are congregations the 'sending bodies'; instead, every congregation is sent. Mission is not simply one of several programs, but rather forms the core of the church's identity."

Granberg-Michaelson went on to address a vital issue in the

Reformed Church — the need for a strategy for discovering, recruiting, and training pastors — especially for leadership in Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American, and multicultural congregations.

Many new pastors needed

"Presently we have 771 congregations with full-time, ordained pastors, and 182 without one; that's 19 per cent of our congregations, twice the vacancies we would normally expect. We have 306 students currently in seminary; 189 presently state their intention of pursuing parish ministry, enough to fill those vacancies if each student became a senior or solo pastor. However at least ninety-one pastors are scheduled for retirement in the next five years. Further, other pastors 'burn out' and are unable to sustain their call in ministry."

Estimates are that the RCA will need at least twenty-two Hispanic, eighteen African-American, and twelve Asian-American pastors, in addition to ninety-six Anglo pastors. Plans also call for starting 182 new churches over the next ten years.

In her report as president to the 2001 General Synod, Carol Mutch focused on the spiritual gifts and ministry of the laity. "The future of

the church in the twenty-first century will rise or fall in direct proportion to the degree we understand the role of lay people in our ministries," she said.

Lay pastoral ministry

One of her proposals was to convene a summit to study the concept of lay pastoral ministry in the RCA. "The reality is that the day is over when we could hope to place an ordained minister of

Word and sacrament in every church of the RCA. We must let go of unrealistic expectations and ask ourselves what can be done to assure that churches who cannot attract or support a full-time ordained pastor still have able and Spirit-led leaders."

Dr. Harun Ruun, a Sudanese who is executive director of the New Sudan Council of Churches, requested the church's advocacy in favor of peace in Sudan. "We

encourage you to work with your lawmakers and lobbyists to stop the bombing," said Ruun. He also asked people to advocate to halt the exploration for oil in Sudan. "It supplies the government with \$5 million a day to use in their war effort," he said. The RCA synod responded by voting unanimously in favor of the recommendation related to Ruun's appeal.

(Reports condensed from RCA website: www.rca.org)

CRC synod reaffirmed commitment to smaller, struggling churches

... continued from page 11

that churches appear to be devoting less time, effort and resources to educational ministries, and that the CRC "has no overall cradle-to-grave plan for nurturing God's covenant people..." The action was in response to an overture from Classis Alberta North.

— instructed the Interchurch Relations Committee to explore the relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN/GKN) and bring a recommendation to Synod 2003 regarding the possibility of restoring full ecclesiastical fellowship. The relationship has been strained over the ethical and theological stances of the RCN/GKN.

— encouraged churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week, Sept. 24-30, 2001. "The task of

eliminating racism is formidable," synod noted; "it is a matter that needs to be put boldly before congregations at all times but especially as many churches celebrate Worldwide Communion." Offerings taken that week help to fund grants and scholarships for ethnic minority leadership and ministry.

— prepared for the church's sesquicentennial. The Christian Reformed Church will turn 150 years old in 2007. It appointed a committee to draft plans for that anniversary. The plans — to be submitted to Synod 2004 — will include a theme, programs, celebrations, publications, contests and conferences.

— scheduled Synod 2003 to meet at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, and Synod 2005 at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. Every few years,

synod moves out of Grand Rapids to other areas where the Christian Reformed denomination is represented. The last time synod met outside Grand Rapids was in 1999 at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

Synod of joy and co-operation

In his closing address, President Morris Greidanus described this as a synod of joy and co-operation. Rev. Peter Slofstra, a delegate from Classis Niagara, called it "a very healing synod." An even more graphic image came from Vicky Van An del, a woman adviser from Edmonton, Alberta, who early in the week told a story about a novice skier being advised to "aim for the open spaces, not for the trees."

Humor

Sammy and the rabbi



Walfried Goossen

Sammy and the Rabbi never met; yet, both played a significant role in our home. My wife, Mary, is a farm girl and always will be. She loves animals. Fortunately, this city slicker does, too. Mary is particularly fond of cats — a good thing, since we live in a two bedroom apartment, which makes cows and horses impractical.

Sammy was a devout cat, a Mennonite like us.... But he was no pacifist.

Mary has always taken a somewhat spiritual approach to pet ownership. When she was five years old on the farm, she liked to play missionary and baptize newborn kittens in her little water wader. I like to think of her as a young missionary for the little brothers of St. Francis.

In the first fifteen years of our marriage, we adopted several dogs and cats, but for one reason or another not for long. One morning I found our black cat, Charles M. Black, at the top of the stairs on the second floor landing stiff as a board. He had succumbed to urinary tract infection. Had we known something about the disease, we might have noticed

something was wrong and taken him to the vet in time. Charley was a handsome, somewhat aristocratic cat. If he brought anyone bad luck, it was only himself.

At the same time, we also had a white Samoyed. He was too much dog for our small yard. We gave him to a friend who lived in the country. But Hans brought him back the next morning — early. Tied to a large bush all night, the dog was displeased with his new arrangement and almost tore the entire bush out of the ground.

Soon we gave him away again to a visitor from the East Coast, who took him home. His family bred dogs and had a large dog run.

A few years later, two weeks before our 15th wedding anniversary, we at last proved ourselves to be competent pet parents.

We realized by then that we likely would not have children of our own. "Mary!" I exclaimed one day. "Everyone we know has kids but us. How do they do it?"

I decided to do a bit of research and got a book on the birds and the bees. Well! The woodpecker position gave me whiplash and the hummingbird approach was murder on my arms.

"I don't think those Audubon people know a thing about the birds and the bees," I declared, and I threw the book in the trash can.

You may have guessed Mary smiles at me a lot. No, we still haven't got any children.

But, we did get Sammy.

It was two weeks before our anniversary, he was eight weeks old, and, to my dismay, a lot smarter than I am. He was also more charming — and cuter. Boy, he was hard on my self-esteem. And he was also a comedian, much funnier than I am. That was the hardest pill to swallow.

Mary, of course, spoiled him. One day my niece brought her female Siamese to our apartment and we let the cats get acquainted. Sammy had a good eye for the ladies (nothing else: he was neutered), but the lady would have nothing to do with him.

He trotted behind her, taking liberties with his nose. He was pretty sensitive about rejection, and when she turned and hissed at him, he bit her buns. At that point we had to separate them.

Mary comforted him in her usual tender way.

"Boy, you spoil that cat," I objected. "I'll bet if I had bitten you in the buns like that when we were dating, you'd never have married me."

Sammy also had a rather unsavory habit. He would lie on the living room carpet scratching his behind, even when we had company. "Cat hygiene" Mary called it.

Again I objected. "I'll bet if I lie on the living room rug and scratch my behind when your parents visit, you wouldn't be so tolerant."

In spite of it all, I loved Sammy — except the day I rushed from the

shower to the living room dripping wet to answer the phone. Why did I do it? They would have called back. But reflex habits are faster than thought, at least mine are. Sammy, excited by the drama, dashed up the hall behind me, jumped onto my leg and climbed from my ankle up to my shoulder.

I screamed and whirled around, swinging one arm. He flew into the corner — splat against the wall, and, sliding down the wall, hit the floor with his head. Then he dashed into the bedroom. The "tire" tracks on my back and arm healed in a couple of weeks.

But I still wonder if I remembered to close the living room drapes.

That cat was some challenge. He even managed to make me feel guilty. It was the first time I gave him catnip. He took a few whiffs, then he took a run at his scratching post, leaped onto it and did a 360 degree swing around it — I don't know how — and landed on the floor on his back. With his front legs straight up in the air, he shoved himself with his hind legs the length of the living room on his back.

Those were the happiest tears I've ever shed. I looked at Mary sheepishly, "I feel guilty — as if I had slipped him crack cocaine."

Sammy was a devout cat, a Mennonite like us. When Mary and I had our daily morning prayers and a brief Scripture reading, he settled down on top of the Bible and purred contentedly.

He even liked the occasional prayer meeting.

One Wednesday, our friend Chris Kent, who has a Christian counselling service, held his annual meeting at our apartment.

About fifteen of us were present — his prayer support team. At the end of the meeting when he was praying, Sammy, just a few months old, jumped on his leg and dug his tiny claws into Chris.

Neither Chris nor I wanted to interrupt the prayer. Chris prayed with a strange intensity, enabled, no doubt, to identify with his suffering clients. At the same time, he shook his leg desperately, hoping

to shake Sammy off. No dice. Sammy likely felt he was getting a good ride and refused to let go.

All of us were in tears by the end of the prayer. And they were not tears of compassion. When Chris concluded his prayer, I grabbed Sammy and took him into the bedroom and closed the door. Sammy may have been a Mennonite, but he was no pacifist.

Cats, like their owners, get cold. Sammy would have been thirteen by our anniversary in mid-June of this year. But two weeks ago, at 11:45 on a Friday night, we took him to the emergency vet. He had lost four or five pounds, his rib cage near his back legs was like a washboard, and I noticed his litter looked unused. That Friday evening he was in his box complaining loudly, and I realized he was in a lot of pain.

About eight years earlier I had spotted something was wrong with him when he stumbled around the apartment with his eyes almost closed. He was listless, unresponsive to food and declined to play. We rushed to the Dundas Animal Hospital fifteen minutes before it closed. In a few days he was all right again, but the vet said he would have been dead in the morning had we not brought him in. With pets, as with kids, you need a lot of information. We learned a good deal that day about male urinary tract problems.

This time, however, there were other complications, and when the bill climbed to \$619 with no guarantee of cure, we asked to



have him put down. Mary took it hard, and I knew I would miss him.

We were determined not to get a cat for a while. But when I realized how unhappy Mary was about missing Sammy, I started reading the pet ads in the *Hamilton*.
Continued on page 14...

Humor/Opinion

Sammy and the rabbi

...continued from page 13

Spectator and looking at postings in the stores.

A week and a half later, I stopped at the Dundas Animal Hospital to inquire about their window sign which offered cats for adoption. I was shown the cats and was drawn to Kitty II, a 13-year-old male cat who had been there for six months. I felt sorry for the old guy. What would happen if no one wanted him?

Mary and I went to see him together. He was healthy, and a gentleman from the tip of the nose to the tip of his tail.

I felt he could quite possibly have another four or five years. Indoor cats often live seventeen years, and more. We decided to take him. The staff at the hospital were happy to see him go to a good home and didn't charge us anything for the care he received there. They also waived the adoption fee. Good thing. Sammy's medical bill had eaten up most of the money we'd saved for a week's vacation in a cottage.

We promptly renamed Kitty II, Sammy II. Then I recalled a poem by Robert Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Two familiar lines especially stood out: "Grow old with

me, the best is yet to be." How symbolic of our hopes for our feline senior citizen. It seemed right that we call him Rabbi Ben Ezra or Ben. But he knows he's Kitty II and is sticking with it.

I still think of Sammy every day. The Rabbi is eating from Sammy's food dish, drinking from his water bowl and using his litter box. He now occupies Sammy's place in our home and in our hearts.

But Sammy will always have his own, undisturbed place in our memories and affections.

They cremate pets, and they cremated Sammy. Perhaps his ashes are still in the air, lodging in some farmer's eye when he's ploughing. Maybe the man curses air pollution — not knowing they spring from a once loving heart — and unwittingly he sheds a tear for Sammy.

Rabbi Ben Ezra, handsome, cheerful and loving, daily blesses our home. Life goes on — for a while.

Walfried Goossen lives in Dundas, Ont. with his wife and their cat.

Synod 2001: a woman adviser's perspective

Building Trust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.



This year, for the first time in the history of the Christian Reformed Church, women officially had an opportunity to contribute to the discussions on the floor of synod and in the committees of synod. Seven women were appointed by the Board of Trustees to serve as advisers. They represented a cross-section of the women in the church. One served the church as a Coffee Break leader, another as education co-ordinator, several women were council members or denominational committee members. I had the privilege of being one of the advisers to synod.



SYNOD NEWS OFFICE PHOTO

Four of the seven women who attended this year's synod as advisers. From left, Mary Bouwma, Stephanie Baker Collins, Sherry Ten Clay, and Carol Kramer.

Mixed feelings

Most of the women had mixed feelings before they came to synod. To be one of seven women among two hundred men felt a bit like a token arrangement. We all had to sort out our feelings about this to some extent. By the time we arrived at synod, however, we had more or less come to terms with that reality. It was an honor to have been appointed and we were open to the experience of our first synodical meeting.

There were several things we wanted to strive for as women. We wanted to be true to ourselves and in our own way contribute to the discussions. In spite of the fact that we were a small group among many men, we realized that individually as persons we could have the same amount of influence as the delegates. Our influence was in terms of ourselves, who we were, and in how we contributed to the discussions.

God blessed us in our efforts

We challenged ourselves to say the right things in the right way and at the right time. And God blessed us in our efforts and provided us with the courage we needed. Though we could not vote, we did feel that our presence made a difference.

Having both men and women at synod is a healthy development. It is normal for men and women to relate in various settings. To do this at the synod meeting is a natural extension of the way we relate to each other as men and women in our ordinary lives, in our relationships within our families, marriages and friendships. Why not in church, too?

Self-awareness and good communication skills are necessary ingredients in healthy relationships. These qualities don't come to us automatically; we learn them. The better we learn them, the better we function in life. We were challenged to practice the art of communication very consciously at synod because of our differences in gender as well as ideas. We needed to accept each other in spite of

these differences. And we succeeded in that with the help of God. The atmosphere at synod was supportive, accepting and caring.

A number of events stand out for me. One of the pastors approached me to talk about women in office. He believed it is wrong, but yet felt safe to reach out and talk about it. During the conversation we connected. Several delegates opened the safety barrier which stood on the stage (to protect the delegates from falling off) to make us feel included in the larger body. Some delegates gave us an extra number of blocks to rebuild a church without walls of hostility (a Lego block assignment for the delegates). Others stood by us as we added our blocks (dedicated to all the women in the church). I also remember my conversations with the women observers who came to synod. We enriched each other. I treasure many moments in my heart.

A compromise solution

The women advisers consciously wanted to represent all the women in the church. We remembered the women for whom attending synod as a woman adviser would be too painful. We realized that women advisers, instead of women delegates, is a compromise solution. However, we accepted it as a bridging measure, a lifeline until the day when all the offices in the church are opened to women. We tried to use the opportunities we were given.

Perhaps our time at synod can be summarized by the hopeful words of Neal Plantinga, the new president of Calvin Theological Seminary: "I think that the movement into ministry of faithful and intelligent women is a great blessing." Sherry Ten Clay, one of the women advisers made this observation: "We were appointed to be women advisers because of our gender, but we are here because of our gifts." We used them on behalf of all the women in the church and were blessed!

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column, and invites anyone who would like to contribute to the column to contact her via fax at: 1-780-473-0970, or via e-mail at: vanandel@canet.com

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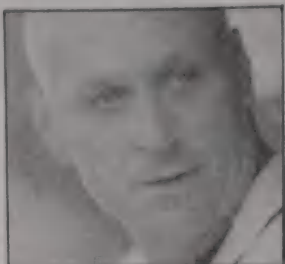
After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



The Iron Man

At the end of this baseball season, Cal Ripken ("The Iron Man") of the Baltimore Orioles will finally hang up the glove and call it a career. The numbers on this guy are astonishing. He played in 2,632 consecutive games. 8,243 was the number of consecutive innings that he played from 1982 to '87, a span covering 904 games. In 1990, his fielding percentage was .996, the highest by a shortstop in major league history. The next number of importance comes in the form of a date: 2007. That's the year that Ripken will enter the Baseball Hall of Fame.



Cal Ripken

GLOBE AND MAIL

Time to sit down

At the height of his career, Ripken distinguished himself even further by taking all the praise and refocusing the spotlight on the game of baseball itself. The game definitely needed someone to stick up for it at the time. It needed an ambassador, coming off the 1994 strike that lost the sport its World Series. Ripken showed integrity and took the job, consistently giving attention to fans with autographs and handshakes whenever he could. He even had the guts to break the consecutive game record he had going (called "The Streak") by voluntarily taking himself out of the lineup for the last home game of 1998. He knew when it was time to sit down.

Now, he knows it's time to sit down for good. Ripken has embodied the game; he's lived its code and legacies. In all the years he played, he would never brush a speck of dirt off his uniform. Dirt was a trademark of the game. He played with a love of baseball, but he knew when he couldn't do it justice anymore.

Wouldn't it be amazing if the rest of us could learn from that? It's startling how many people continue to try to function in positions that they are no longer fit to fill. Some burn out and others never had it in the first place. After ten years of meeting and observing teachers in different schools, it amazes me that some who are so blatantly incompetent to teach continue to do so. You'd think that you would figure out when you're not meant to do something anymore, particularly when you're repeatedly told over the years.

I mentioned this to my brother-in-law from Ottawa a couple of years ago around the campfire. He said that that happens in any organization. Inept people often stick around forever. This doesn't just happen in education; it happens everywhere. He was right.

The concept in I Corinthians of the body of Christ functioning according to the gifts of its members is a beautiful one. In the light of this model, many of our human organizations are sadly lacking. We need some serious realism in our companies, our schools, our homes, and our churches — a realistic sense of which gifts each of us has and which ones we don't. It's tempting to follow a path that others want us to follow or that we think will give us more self-esteem and praise. It's far more difficult to listen, watch, and talk carefully as we try to figure out if we really belong in a certain role.

It's an awesome thing to see someone who very obviously belongs in their career. My doctor, for example — a guy who loves people, is a meticulous researcher, and a hesitant dispenser of drugs. It's quite another to see somebody languish at something they're unfit to do in the first place. If only we all had the strength to see in the mirror deep and long enough.



Tim Antonides teaches Grade 8 and is a basketball coach at Surrey Christian School in Surrey, B.C.

Evidence of intelligent design in the universe increasing

CC Staff with files from Baptist Press

"Christianity was the midwife bringing modern science to birth in the mid-1700s," declared Sir John Polkinghorne, an Anglican priest and physicist from Cambridge University in England. Every new discovery of the cosmos is an affirmation of God at work in the universe he created, he said in addressing a "Cosmos and Creator" conference at the Discovery Institute public policy think tank in Seattle.

As such, both science and Christianity have things to offer each other; far from being at war with one another, science and Christianity should be good friends, Polkinghorne said at the two-day conference sponsored by the Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture and attended by about 700 participants in late April.

Evidence increasing

The Cosmos and Creator speakers explained that evidence for intelligent design of the universe is increasing (compared to the "random chance" of evolution) as is the awareness that former explanations for the origins of the universe (such as evolution) are incomplete and inadequate.

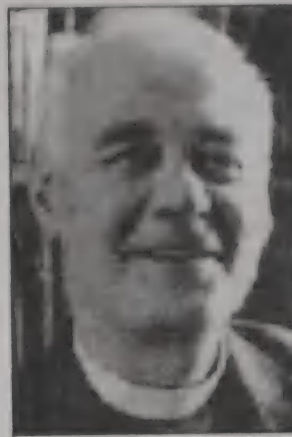
The Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture — one of six program areas at the Discovery Institute — has become known as the "intelligent design" movement's national think tank.

Polkinghorne's view was supported by nuclear physicist Peter E. Hodgson of Oxford University and five other conference speakers who are noted experts in varied scientific fields revolving around cosmology, the study of the universe and its origins.

Four developments converged for the birth of modern science, Hodgson explained: writing, mathematics, communication and, last, a well-developed social structure so various responsibilities could be divided among the people, leaving some to spend their lives studying, thinking and writing about what they learn.

Hodgson suggested the reason modern science developed as it did in the 17th century was because of the cultural acceptance of Christian beliefs about the world:

- The world — matter — is good.
- Matter is rational; it behaves in an orderly way.
- The study of matter is practical; it has value to the society.



MERIDIAN HERALD

Sir John Polkinghorne (above), and his recent book (right) about God and science.

- Selfishness is counterproductive: If you discover something, share that knowledge with others.

Modern science was founded on the belief that God as creator was both free to do what he wanted and yet rational, in that what was done, was done systematically and in order — if one seed would grow after being planted and watered, so would similar seeds, Hodgson said.

Christian belief vital in development of science

"At each stage of the process Christian belief was vital," Hodgson said. "[The 20th century philosopher] Alfred North Whitehead said the development of science was due to the work of medieval theologians who embedded the idea of order, of cause and effect."

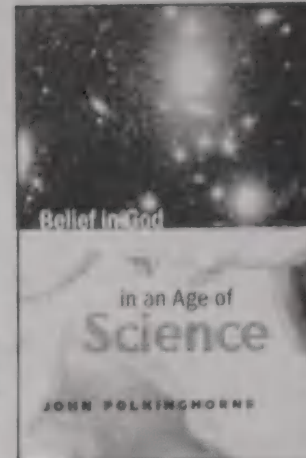
In science there are three modes of explanation: chance, law and design, said Stephen Meyer, philosopher of science at Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash., and director of the Discovery Institute.

In the 1800s it became fashionable to combine chance and law and leave God out of the design element, he noted. This was the period when British naturalist Charles Darwin postulated his ideas on evolution through the process of natural selection — the survival of the fittest.

Darwin made theological unnecessary

"Darwin accounted for designer substitutes," Meyer said. "Darwin made the theological unnecessary."

Discovery Institute, a public policy forum based in Seattle, has emerged as the national think tank



for the "intelligent design" movement, which holds that the foundations of life are too complex to have been created by chance, or evolution.

Although the fast-growing movement and its leading scientists, mathematicians and other proponents have gained considerable grassroots support, many scientists and theologians remain skeptical about intelligent design (ID).

Some theologians, meanwhile, protest ID's openness to the thesis that the earth is billions of years old, not the thousands of years suggested by a literal reading of the Bible. Some object to the fact that while ID proponents insist on the work of an intelligent designer, they don't require that to be the biblical God.

The Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture is the largest and the newest of six program areas for the Discovery Institute, which was founded in 1990. The others include technology and public policy, environment and the economy, national security and defense, religion, liberty and civic life.

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Theology

Theology in context: Lesslie Newbigin's contribution

Michael Goheen

Introduction

Hendrikus Berkhof, the great Dutch theologian, comments that theology is 'meant to equip the saints for service.' The problem is that theology often seems to many to be dry and irrelevant. Perhaps part of the reason is, as Berkhof puts it, 'classic dogmatics gave profound answers to questions that no one asks anymore.'

In his introduction to his own restatement of the Christian faith, he says: 'What God has given us [in Scripture] is inexhaustible, but we are only little people, still on the way toward fully understanding everything, while the gospel needs restating in ever new situations. There are bound to be many theological articulations of the faith, all of them pointing to the same thing and by their multiplicity relativizing and complementing each other' (1979:xii).

Three dangers

In the first article on theology in context we noticed that the importance of context is increasingly recognized in the theological enterprise. We also noted three dangers: the final authority of Scripture can be eclipsed; the history and tradition of the church can be ignored; and the spectre of relativism.

Can a way be found to affirm the importance of context without falling prey to these attendant dangers? I believe the insights of Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) can provide us with some direction. In this article I sketch his understanding of contextual theology. Lesslie Newbigin served as a missionary for 40 years in India and is regarded by many as one of the leading missionary theologians in the twentieth century. I unfold his position in four statements, paying special attention to the third section.

The Bible is the starting point and final authority for all contextual theologies.

For Newbigin there are at least four tributaries that flow into the stream of theology: Scripture, the tradition of the church especially found in creeds and confessions, current issues and needs of the church in a particular culture, and the theological work of churches from other cultures. We will look at each of these. Yet these are not 'equal partners'; priority must be given to Scripture since it is God's revelation.

Scripture must be given primacy in relation to present context.

One of the problems in contextual theology is that most models put context before Scripture. This is the case in most of the models surveyed by Stephen Bevans in *Models of Contextual Theology*. In contrast, Newbigin says: "... Authentic Christian thought and action begin not by attending to the aspirations of the people, not by answering the questions they are asking in their terms, not by offering solutions to the problems as the world sees them. It must begin and continue by attending to what God has done in the story of Israel and supremely in the story of Jesus Christ. It must continue by indwelling that story so that it is our story, the way we understand the real story. And then, and this is the vital point, to attend with open hearts and minds to the real needs of people..." (1989:151). In this statement, although the context (real needs of people) is recognized, Scripture is, nevertheless, acknowledged as the final authority: "True Christian theology is a form of rational discourse... which accepts the primacy of the Biblical story..."

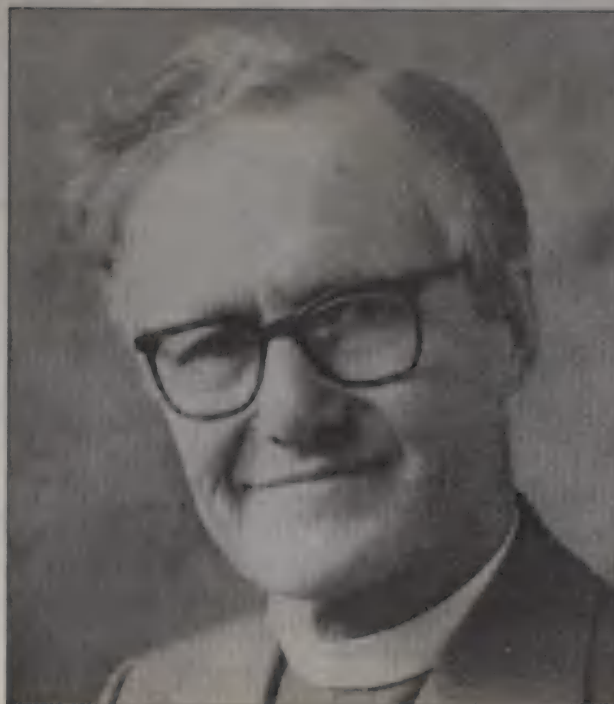
Scripture must judge history of church

Moreover, Scripture must also judge the history of the church. Scripture is not simply a record of the earliest chapters of church history but the rule in faith and life for the church at all times. While the Bible does not provide a prescribed pattern to be mindlessly imitated - after all it, too, is given in a cultural setting - its authority is final.

Newbigin speaks of two fatal identifications that can eclipse the power of the gospel. The first fatal identification is between the gospel and church traditions that bear the gospel: "Traditions which are good in themselves are evil when they are put into the place which belongs to the Gospel itself" (1948:53). The second fatal identification is between the gospel and theology: "The danger inherent in all the (necessary) work of theological statement is that it may go beyond the task of protecting the gospel and become a series of additions to the gospel" (1948:16).

Finally, dialogue between churches in various cultural settings is vital to the church's understanding of the message of Scripture. Our cultural blindnesses are corrected and our limited insights supplemented by those who read the Scripture with different eyes.

It is essential, therefore, to truly understand the nature of biblical authority. It is no accident that in



Lesslie Newbigin

the last decades of Newbigin's life, when he was struggling with a missionary encounter with Western culture, he spent much time defining biblical authority. I cannot possibly summarize his views, but note one point important for our subject.

Location of reliable truth

For Newbigin, the difference between rationalistic humanism and the Bible is the location of reliable truth. In the Bible, truth is located in the story of God's deeds in history centred in Jesus Christ, while in classical thought reliable truth is located in timeless ideas that can be accessed by human reason (1995:3). In the biblical model, truth can be expressed in mutually enriching images from various times and places. There need be no search for an unchanging universal theology. Yet, the gospel is the revelation and accomplishment of the goal of universal history. Since it tells the real story of the whole world, it will (should) shape the whole of the church's life, including theological reflection.

All contextual theology must be done in conscious connection with the 'rule of faith' provided in the creeds of the history of the church.

Newbigin's most ringing affirmation of the importance of church history, tradition, and creeds came in an interesting context worth noting. In the early part of the century,

the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist traditions joined to form the Church of South India. Newbigin was one of the most articulate advocates of the union. The British Anglicans were most vocal in their opposition. These Anglicans continued to stress the importance of the history of the church and its traditions, creeds, and confessions. Newbigin's response was to affirm this but to say that the church is more than a historically continuous institution; it is also a body continually shaped by the word of God. To the Anglican charge that the Indian church was not giving enough credence to church tradition, Newbigin's response was twofold.

Church history, tradition can't be bypassed

On the one hand, the church is connected to the historical Jesus; that is, it finds its identity in the events of Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, the church is, as the Anglicans insisted, a historically continuous institution. Newbigin wrote: "The Bible can only be understood in the fellowship of the Church - and the Church means the whole company of Christ's people in all ages" (1948:135). In other words, church history, tradition, confessions, and creeds cannot be bypassed. This is part of understanding the Scriptures in fellowship with the church (Ephesians 3:18). As Geoffrey Wainwright says of Newbigin: the creeds "constitute a point of

reference for all engagement with particular passages [of Scripture]" (Wainwright 319). There is even a sense in which, when crucial biblical teaching is explicitly formulated, like the Trinitarian formulations, the church "may never go back on what it has decided" (1978:27).

Firm rooting required

Newbigin was adamant that all contemporary struggles with Scripture require a firm rooting in the tradition, creeds, and confessions of the church. His concern for the importance of context did not bring about the eclipse of the gains of history.

The church must constantly rethink and restate her confession and theology in each new generation and in each new cultural situation.

In Newbigin's words: "The responsibility of the church [is] to declare to each generation what is the faith... This is always a fresh task in every generation, for thought is never still. The words in which the Church states its message in one generation have changed their meaning by the time the next has grown up. No verbal statement can be produced which relieves the Church of the responsibility continually to re-think and re-state its message. No appeal [to creeds and confessions] can alter the fact that the Church has to state in every new generation how it interprets the historic faith, and how it relates it to the new thought and experience of its time... Nothing can remove from the Church the responsibility for stating now what is the faith. It belongs to the essence of a living Church that it should be able and willing to do so." (1948:137f.).

For Newbigin there are two important reasons for this need for re-statement. First, continually re-confessing the faith in a relevant way will enable the church to "lead her members into a full and vivid apprehension of the faith" (1948:137). Theology that does not speak to the issues and needs of the present will not enable the church to take hold of and own the faith. Second, a relevant and contextual theology will challenge the current cultural idols that are destructive of Christian faith. Older confessions and theologies may have faithfully confronted the errors of their time with the gospel. In a new generation or a new culture, different idolatrous cultural currents threaten Christian faithfulness.

In sum then, Christian theology has a positive and negative task.

Theology

Positively, the whole of Christian theology is to explicate the Christian faith in the present to enable the church to continually take hold of its confession in a living way. Negatively, "dogmatic statements are for the purpose of protecting the statement of this fact [Christ's work] from distortion by various tendencies of human thought." (1948:165).

Two threats to faithfulness

Newbigin saw two threats to theological faithfulness. On the one hand, if the church simply repeats theological formulations from the past or from another culture, her faith will be irrelevant to the problems of the present. On the other hand, making relevance the primary concern runs the danger of a compromising accommodation. The church would be absorbed into the current idols of the culture.

Newbigin expresses this twofold danger graphically in terms of a "jellyfish" or "petrified fossil" church: "... there are Churches which have so evaded the duty of articulate confession that they have become, like jellyfish, incapable of moving in any direction but that of the tide; but there are also examples of Churches which have so identified faith with blind submission to authoritatively prescribed formulae that they have become but petrified fossils, having the form of the Church but not its life" (1948:142; compare Moltman's fossil, chameleon images).

Two examples of "contextual theology", one within the canon of Scripture and the other from the first three centuries of the church, provide examples of how Newbigin understands the call to relate to the culture in a "challengingly relevant" way.

Challenging gnosticism

The first is the gospel of John. "Here the language and thought forms of that Hellenistic world are so employed that Gnostics in all ages have thought that the book was written for them." (1986e:53). Clearly the use of language that employs gnostic categories and addresses gnostic questions would make John's gospel *relevant* to gnostics of all ages. "And yet nowhere in Scripture is the absolute contradiction between the word of God and human culture stated with more terrible clarity." The gospel of John also *challenges* the idolatry at the heart of gnostic thought. For example, John opens: "In the beginning was the *logos*." As he continues, it becomes clear that the *logos* is not the impersonal and invisible law of rationality that permeates the universe giving it



BOB AND VALERIE TAYLOR, BRUCE COLEMAN INC.

Newbigin wrote: "... there are Churches which have so evaded the duty of articulate confession that they have become, like jellyfish, incapable of moving in any direction but that of the tide...."

order, but rather the man Jesus Christ. So, John begins by identifying with the classical longing for the source of order expressed in the term *logos*, but subverts, challenges, and contradicts the idolatrous understanding that had developed in the classical world. In this way John is both relevant and faithful: relevant because he uses familiar categories that express existential struggles, faithful because he challenges the idolatrous worldview that shapes those categories with the gospel and calls for repentance.

Trinitarian controversies

The second example is the trinitarian and Christological controversies from early church history. Newbigin once remarked that he wished he had been taught in seminary that these disputes were really just examples of contextual theology; it would have enabled him to understand these struggles more accurately. The formulation of the trinitarian faith was the fruit of a missionary encounter between the gospel and pagan classical culture. The church was entrusted with a message that in the man Jesus Christ God has entered history to reveal and accomplish the

salvation of the world that will be completed at the end of history. That message needed to be communicated to people whose thought-world was very different from that of the Old Testament.

Struggle to protect gospel

Foundational to the classical worldview were the dichotomies of the intelligible and sensible worlds, and of virtue and fortune in history. We cannot enter deeply into this very foreign worldview, but suffice it to say that such a way of understanding the world required a whole range of intermediate beings to bridge the gap between pure being which was unknowable and unapproachable (intelligible world), and the ordinary world of things and events (sensible world). If God were pure being, then it would be natural (as also in the Indian worldview, Newbigin notes) to place Jesus somewhere in this intermediate range – something less than God. The struggle of the church was to protect the gospel from being accommodated and absorbed into this pagan worldview. But further, the church also wanted to offer the gospel as a way beyond these crippling dichotomies.

It was in this context that the theologians of the first three centuries, especially Athanasius, developed the full-blown doctrine of the Trinity. The language in which the trinitarian faith was expressed was "necessarily the language of time and place" (1994:27). The crucial word on which the whole conflict turned was *homoousion*. In the classical worldview one could accept Jesus as an intermediary who was like God (*homoiousios*) but not one in being with God (*homoousios*). The historian Gibbon mocked the spectacle of Christians fighting over a diphthong. But that one diphthong meant the difference between faithfully expressing the gospel or surrendering to the classical pagan worldview. "The whole existence of the Christian faith hung on that diphthong" (1993:229).

The doctrine of the Trinity was simply making explicit what was revealed in the gospel in the context of a missionary encounter with classical culture. This is contextual theology in that the church formulated its doctrine in interaction with contemporary culture and also in the language and thought forms of the time to make known and to protect the gospel.

New ways must be found

Newbigin continues: "... the church can never go back on what was then decided. But it is also true that it is not enough for the church to go on repeating in different cultural situations the same words and phrases. New ways have to be found of stating the essential Trinitarian faith, and for this the church in each new cultural situation has to go back to the original biblical sources of this faith in order to lay hold on it afresh and to state it afresh in contemporary terms" (1994:27). Newbigin goes on to note that today many Christians simply repeat that early Trinitarian formulation but that their working concept of God is far from the living trinitarian confession of the early church. There is a need to rearticulate the Trinity in fresh terms to protect the very thing that the Fathers of the first three centuries sought to protect. The trinitarian faith must come alive in the church today!

All contextual theologies must engage in dialogue with other theologies in other cultural situations.

This dialogue must be "open to the witness of churches in all other places, and thus saved from absorption into the culture of [any one] place" (1989:152). There is a

danger that any one local theology will be absorbed into the culture of that place. There is a need, therefore, for a dialogue that is both mutually corrective and mutually enriching: mutually enriching since each cultural contextualization opens up new insights into Scripture, and mutually correcting because each cultural theology has blind spots that arise from cultural idolatry.

Newbigin writes: "The reference to mutual correction is the crucial one. All reading of the Bible and all our Christian discipleship are necessarily shaped by the cultures which have formed us... the only way in which the gospel can challenge our culturally conditioned interpretation of it is through the witness of those who read the Bible with minds shaped by other cultures. We have to listen to others. The mutual correction is sometimes unwelcome, but it is necessary and it is fruitful" (1989:196).

Conclusion

If the church's faith is to be a living faith, it must continue to confess its faith and theologize in new contexts. To be faithful to that call, the church today has, at least, a fourfold task: it must continually rearticulate its faith in fresh terms so that that faith remains vibrant and protected from the current idols of the day; this articulation must be done by way of a fresh return to Scripture, which is God's revelation and therefore the final authority and judge of all contextual theologies; the church must recognize that historical theology, creeds, and confessions are crucial, so that in any contextual theology, gains from past doctrinal struggles are not lost; the church must pay attention to the critique and enrichment that come from theologies in other parts of the world. Different parts of the church have a penchant for protecting and emphasizing one or another of these four aspects. But all four will be critical for faithfulness to the gospel today in our contemporary world.

Michael Goheen is an associate professor at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., who specializes in worldview, mission and world Christianity.

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News Comment



Bert Hielema

I HAD A LOOK AT MY passport this week. Not my current Canadian one, but my old Dutch "paspoort" which shows a picture of a good-looking 18-year-old, described as having an oval face, blue eyes and blond hair, born in Groningen and being a student. In 1947 the cost of the passport was five guilders or \$2 Cdn. The renewal two years later cost double that amount.

That year I needed this document to travel abroad, which I did that glorious summer, spending four weeks on the south coast of England, mostly on the beach in Exmouth and Teignmouth, and another three weeks in Germany and Sweden. I toured, by the greatest form of transportation possible: a coastal vessel of some 500 tons, a small crew of seven and me as paying guest (my father paid one guilder a day, about 40 cents Cdn.). The owner was a family friend.

THE SEA: SINCE THEN I've always had a great love for its immensity and its majestic and sometimes wild beauty, helped by a lack of seasickness, no matter how stormy it was. Germany still had war-like conditions, with cigarettes being the best currency. Well-stocked with the favorite English brand, I paid for a glass of beer with one Player. Curiously, when I went ashore in Friedrichshafen, my high school German had vanished and only English words emerged. On the Baltic, minesweepers were still busy. In Sweden I only learned two phrases: inte pinge — no money — and wacke flicka — nice woman.

After completing my military service in early 1951, and in spite of having an admission ticket to either the faculty of law or medicine, I decided to go to Canada. My passport showed that on June 8, 1951 I was checked over by the Department of National Health and Welfare in the Hague and the M.O., the Medical Officer at the Canadian Embassy. N. Morris, who had a very artistic signature, written in green ink with a flourish, passed me as being fit to come to this country. On June 14 of that year I received my Immigrant Visa, and 10 days later I was on the M.S. Veendam, of the Holland-America Line, sailing from Rotterdam to New York, chugging along for 10 days and nights in glorious weather and with sumptuous seven-course meals every day until we reached the American shores on July 3, 50 years ago this past week.

A FRIENDLY MAN guided me through the maze of the New York underground to the Grand Central Station in the Big Apple, from where I continued my trip to Fort Erie. There, on July 4 a stamp in my passport with the letters L.I. — Landed Immigrant — signalled my arrival in Canada. I continued by train, transferring in London, to Strathroy, where another friendly farmer and his wife welcomed me as their farmhand for the year at a meagre wage of \$60 per month plus room and board.

I was very fortunate: this was a grain farmer, no cattle. I slept next to the kitchen, and when I heard

the sound of the kettle at 8 a.m., I got up and ate my cornflakes or whatever she offered and worked till 5 or so, a bit longer in harvest time. An easy two months of plowing, cleaning up a chicken coop, and helping with the combine followed, after which we parted on friendly terms. Those two months of English immersion in a family setting helped me to learn the language enough so that I could follow conversations and participate in them.

My next job was in a feedmill — 58 hours per week at 50 cents per hour. Again I boarded with a splendid family, so that my first year in Canada was an excellent introduction to this great country, where I now celebrate my 50 years.

I won't bore you with the remainder of the half century: how I started to work for myself as an insurance agent in 1952, after a brief stint with a finance company as a bill collector, and stayed independent for the rest of my life. You may have noticed a streak of independence in my writing. Married in 1953 — happily I should add — we raised 5 children, who all attended Christian Schools, and all went to a different university, including Dordt and Redeemer, and are all in excellent and rewarding positions in society.

WITH CANADA DAY JUST celebrated, I must pay tribute to our great country, which has become the best country to live in. I have often been back to my motherland — I still have seven brothers and sisters who live there and my wife, too, has numerous relatives there — yet I like the spaciousness, the ethnic diversity, the possibilities for a successful life. I am especially grateful that I had the opportunity to develop mentally and spiritually in ways that would have been not nearly as easy in traditional and much more secular Europe.

I like to pay tribute to a few persons: it was Peter Nienhuis, who worked for me as a Real Estate Salesman in 1972, who gave me a Dutch book, *Sterven en dan?* (After death, what?) which had a lasting influence on my thinking on eternity and the myth of heaven. It was Wybe Bylsma who had alerted me to a little booklet called *The Limits of Growth*, which changed my thinking on the future of our planet and led to one of the highlights of my life in Canada.

In 1973, in a Canada wide competition among real estate practitioners, both in the field and in academia, I wrote an essay on "The City, Key to Survival," which won

me a substantial cash prize as well as a free trip to Vancouver, where I was presented with the winner's trophy. In it I mentioned the four laws of ecology which I think everybody should memorize as a guide for the 21st Century, the age where reality will catch up with our current practises. They are: (1) Everything is connected to everything else. (2) Everything must go somewhere. (3) Nature knows best. (4) There is no such thing as a free lunch. This essay set me on a path of environmental thinking.

NOW, IN 2001, IT WOULD be a good idea to add a fifth law: the one of compound interest. \$1000 set out at 10 per cent interest doubles in seven years. This is also true in the reverse. Suppose we have a supply of oil which, under current consumption, would last 100 years. However, if it is used at a rate that grows five per cent per year — as projected by VP Cheney — it will last only for 36 years. It is even more pronounced for a longer term, say 1,000 years. At the same compound annual growth of five per cent, it would be good for a mere 125 years. The political oil people in Alberta and Washington don't understand this simple mathematical given which proves that increasing supply, building more power plants, drilling for more oil is exactly the wrong approach. If we want to avoid the dire consequences of higher prices, due to rapid depletion, and more pollution, we have to find the political will not only to reduce energy consumption increase to zero, but even begin to use less.

THE LAWS OF ECOLOGY have a special effect on our health, because everything must go somewhere. The more we burn, the more gets piled up in the eco-system, and since everything is connected to everything else, the pollutants settle everywhere, including in our own bodies, where they become POPS, Persistent Organic Pollutants.

A few weeks ago it was Pop's — Father's — Day. These POPS might affect our pops in such a way that they are not as likely to pop, as POPS diminish pop's sperm count. There is no such thing as a free lunch. We pay for our earth-exploiting extravagance in various ways, and falling fertility is one of them.

POPS also make female birds act like males and cause male alligators to have shrunken penises. Last year scientists discovered that more than one per cent of the polar bears in the Norway Arctic, are hermaphrodites — possessing

both male and female reproductive organs.

Nature knows best. Billions have been spent on cancer research and, apart from some isolated successes, cancer still is spreading. "The proportion of North Americans contracting cancer has risen to 40 per cent," writes Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D., in her book, *Living Downstream*, "in spite of less smoking, better diets and more people exercising. Says she: "We carry in our bodies many carcinogens that are no longer used, such as DDT. Also cancer is a multicausal disease that unfolds over a period of decades, exposures during childhood — even prior to birth — are relevant to our present cancer risks."

We have been tampering with nature, have forgotten to listen to her pleading for gentleness and now have caused unnatural events such as ozone depletion, global warming and disappearing species. Just as the stock market has a tendency to overcorrect on bad economic news, so, because of the imbalances we have generated, nature too will do this, because Mother Earth has her own laws, which we trespass at our own peril.

WE ALL ARE CHILDREN of the soil. Dr. Andre (Accent Aigu) Voisin has written a book *Soil, Grass and Cancer*, of which the thrust is that we, in our effort to produce food for an exploding world population, have forgotten that our bodies come from soil, or, as the Bible puts it, "dust and ashes." It is this that finally determines vigor and health. The adulteration of the "Adam" of the "dust" from which we spring may be sealing our destiny on Planet Earth. In order to prevent cancer, we have to start with the very basic: healing the soil, make it free of artificial fertilizer and man-made pesticides.

It is clear to me that the ecological problems will not be solved by such Band-aid measures as tax levies, greater efficiencies, and recycling. Even Kyoto doesn't cut it. More research, as Pres. Bush maintains, more knowledge gained through science is another cop-out. Also, theology separating "nature" from "grace" fails to honor creation as God's greatest treasure.

We need a radically different way of relating to the earth and the support systems of the planet. The four laws of ecology provide the key. Memorize them.

Bert Hielema loves the earth, especially in Tweed, Ont.



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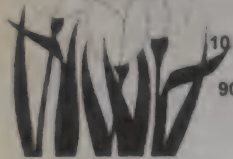
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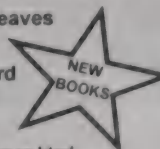
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News

Christian ministry targets psychic fairs

Alan Doerksen

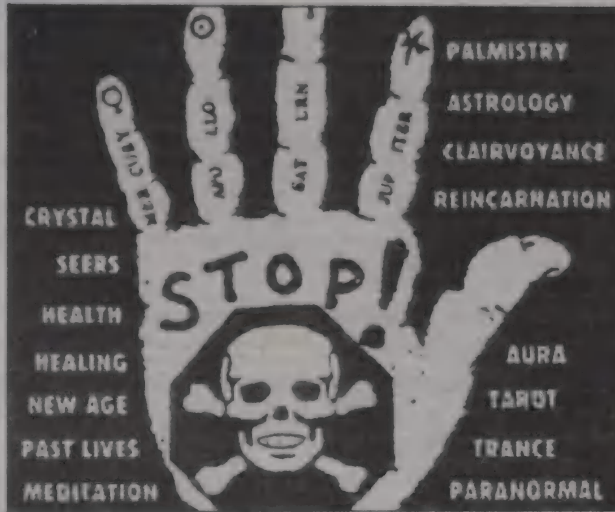
TORONTO — One mission field few Christians have considered working in is psychic fairs. But James Knox and his company — All Things Possible Corporation (ATP) — believe that Christians should be actively protesting these exhibitions.

Psychic fairs are exhibitions with a decidedly New Age influence presented several times a year in cities such as Toronto. They focus on practices and beliefs such as palmistry, astrology, reincarnation and the paranormal. Psychic fairs are "springing up all over the place like toadstools," asserts Knox, director of ATP. In Toronto, there are four or five a year, he notes.

Getting Christians out of pews

Part of Knox's job is "trying to get Christians out of pews" to protest against psychic fairs. Only a few churches have responded to his call to action, but one church, the Prayer Palace, delivered 130 volunteers to help demonstrate at one psychic fair.

Knox reports that with so many Christian demonstrators at that psychic fair, "we swamped them... The security team of the Prayer Palace were there to protect us, dressed in RCMP uniforms... they looked in professional that the International Centre thought they



A graphic with a message from the All Things Possible Corporation website.

worked for them.

"Get these Christians outta here!" they cried... to the pastor. When they realized their mistake, about a half hour later, they called the police... who turned out to be a Christian who knew the pastor, and whose aunt was there protesting. God is amazing!

"We boldly handed out tracts at the front door to those attending and leaving. Despite the bitter cold, we stayed for two hours and handed out nearly 3,000 tracts."

Knox has written tracts which he and his helpers hand out to those who attend psychic fairs. One of Knox's concerns is "a lot of people are borrowing things from Christianity... and applying it to New Age teachings." Psychic fairs "prey on people who are vulnerable."

Big business

There is also a "big business" connection to psychic fairs, explains Knox. At one fair, an

organizer was charging \$1,000 per table for displays, and stood to earn about \$100,000, he says.

Thankful for the help of Prayer Palace volunteers at one psychic fair, Knox says, "I would hope that other churches would pick up the torch and carry on."

Telling their future

In one of his tracts, Knox has written, "Dear Occultist, Allow me to tell you your future. According to the Bible, those who practice astrology, palmistry, tarot and other occultism, practice detestable practices to the one true God. So offensive was this to God that He ordered the Jewish people to stone to death those who conducted such practices."

In a recent newsletter, Knox gives his impressions of how he and other volunteers protested at the 11th annual Toronto Psychic Expo. First, he and two other Christians handed out tracts to people waiting in line to enter the expo. Then he went into the fair and, he writes, "For 30 minutes I handed out flyers to those attending, and a harder hitting one for exhibitors. They were easy to spot — dressed in black or in wild outfits like hippies.... They seemed to know what I was handing out and politely refused.... Only one occultist challenged me: 'My god doesn't judge.' Had I been quicker

I would have said, 'Your god has already been judged!'

I was then told to leave by the promoter or I would be charged with trespassing. "No problem," I said, heading for the sidewalk. At the end of the sidewalk I met up with a policeman who wanted to know my life history. He read the material I was handing out then said to the promoter who was so keen to see me charged 'This doesn't look like 'hate literature.'... The policeman warned me that if I was to step on their premises (parking lot included) I would be charged."

Knox asserts, "You won't find a group with a more urgent need to hear the gospel" than people attending psychic fairs. "These people are already searching."

Knox's agency takes its name from Matthew 19:26 (NIV), where Jesus says, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." In that same chapter, Jesus tells his disciples, "... it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ATP takes its logo from that verse: a camel and the eye of a needle.

Besides protesting psychic fairs, Knox also produces "Christian cheques" featuring Bible verses. That business venture was disappointing at first, he says, but now is growing week by week.

European leaders call for abolition of the death penalty

CC Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "Some death-penalty abolitionists protest that if the state executes Timothy McVeigh, it is involved in state-sanctioned 'murder,'" writes Keith Pavlischek, a Fellow of the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C. "Some Christians argue that support for capital punishment contradicts a belief in 'Christ-centered forgiveness.' While there may be good reasons for not applying the death penalty in certain cases, such reasons are not supported by either Scripture or classical Christian teaching on the role of the government as an agent of God's justice."

Guilt not an issue

The execution of Timothy McVeigh has once again brought the debate about capital punishment to the fore. McVeigh's case is unique in that his guilt has not been an issue. Instead, the argument has been over the death penalty itself.

Pope John Paul II and the U.S.

bishops have voiced strong opposition to the death penalty, as have many world leaders, especially in Europe. A coalition of religious and human rights groups handed the U.N. a petition with 3.2 million signatures from 146 countries calling for a moratorium on executions. The London, England-based human rights group Amnesty International said the execution was a triumph of vengeance over justice.

Donahue criticizes capital punishment

On a televised debate on CNN's "Larry King Live", Phil Donahue expressed perhaps the most prevalent argument: capital punishment is inherently wrong because it rewards one act of vengeance with another act of vengeance.

"I think we have become the thing we hate," Donahue said. "We've actually somehow convinced ourselves that it's OK to kill somebody because they killed somebody. It doesn't work. It's arbitrary."

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who also appeared on the show, said, "Jesus Christ never condemned capital punishment. The Scripture clearly — in both the Old and the New Testaments — stipulates that capital punishment is the appropriate penalty for those who take life and for those who commit the crime of murder."

Colson changed his view

"There is no more difficult issue for many Americans than capital punishment," wrote Chuck Colson in a Breakpoint commentary. "For most of my life, I opposed it. I thought the death penalty was wrong because it was too easy to make a mistake and execute an innocent person. As a lawyer, I knew the system was fallible."

His Christian beliefs, however, brought him to a different conclusion: "The Scriptures teach that people are responsible for their own behavior. The object of justice is not to rehabilitate or create



Charles (Chuck) Colson

some new person ... but rather to balance the scales of justice. And sometimes the only way to do that is to give the offender his just deserts: capital punishment.

"So as this sentence is carried out, remember that the execution of Timothy McVeigh isn't about therapy, or retribution, or getting even. It's about justice and preserving the dignity of man," he wrote.

Daniel M. Buechlein, Catholic

Archbishop of Indianapolis, offered yet another view. He does not reject the classical view but opposes the death penalty on other grounds. "Even as our Church opposes the death penalty in a case as awful as McVeigh's, we do not question, in principle, the state's right to impose the death penalty," said Buechlein. "Yet we must oppose the death penalty because the circumstances of our day do not warrant it."

The Council of Europe and European Parliament held the first world congress against the death penalty June 21-23. Some 20 presidents of national parliaments made a solemn appeal for the universal abolition of the death penalty or at least for a moratorium on executions.

By now 76 countries have abolished the death penalty. Chile is the latest country to abolish capital punishment, and was publicly congratulated by John Paul II.

A recent report says 2,000 people were executed last year, more than half in China.

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<p>As of May 1999: Note: 7% GST will be added to all prices listed below.</p> <p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, nine business days prior to publication.</p> <p>RATES All personal and family announcements: \$16.00 per column inch (pci) + GST (columns are two inches wide). Display advertising re: businesses and organizations: minimum \$18.20 pci + GST, depending on design and frequency.</p> <p>PHOTOS There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged pci, but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.</p> <p>PERSONAL ADS <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. 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Anny & Herman Vandekleut Anne Teeuwsen Henk & Betty Teeuwsen Dick & Evelyn Teeuwsen Chris & Jenny Teeuwsen Diny & Henk Bergsma Frank & Tiny Teeuwsen Ada & John Vriend Bill & Audrey Teeuwsen Gerry & Maaike Teeuwsen with 35 grandchildren and their respective spouses, and 69 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Weddings BROUWER - JANSSEN: Believing that the Lord had brought them together, we, Jim & Tenny Brouwer of Chatham and Luke & Helen Janssen of Kitchener, rejoice in announcing the forthcoming marriage of our children Irene and Jeff The ceremony will take place, the Lord willing, on Saturday July 21, 2001, at 11 a.m. at Mount Hamilton Christian Reformed Church, 1411 Upper Wellington Street. Future address: 17 Holbrook Rd., Hamilton ON L9C 2H1</p> <p>HAVERKAMP - SCHEERER: John & Linie Haverkamp of Clinton and Laverne & Susan Scheerer of Drayton are proud and pleased to announce the engagement of their children Sylvia Kathleen and David Christopher Their wedding will take place on Saturday, July 21, 2001, in the Christian Reformed Church, Drayton, Ont. Pastor Gary Bomhof officiating. Love and best wishes from your families. May God bless you richly.</p> <p>DKYHOUSE - ADEMA: With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, Gerrit and Cori Dykhouse and John and Gerdie Adema are pleased to announce the wedding celebration of their children Jennifer Cori and Kevin Sidney on July 28, 2001 at 2:00 p.m. in the Wallaceburg Christian Reformed Church, Wallaceburg, Ontario. Correspondence address: #808 - 5200 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, Ontario L7L 1C5</p> <p>Birth Ed & Tilda Bosman joyfully announce the safe arrival of their first grandchild, a healthy baby girl born June 11, 2001, weighing 6 lbs, 2oz. Her parents Julianne & Devon Paul have named her Semyra Machala Together they make their home at 371 Jay Crescent, Orangeville, ON L9W 4Y9.</p>	<p>Leens Willowdale 1951 July 26 2001 <i>Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.</i> With gratitude to God, we celebrate the gift of fifty years of marriage to our parents. JAN and JANTJE DE KONING We celebrate their love, their passion for the things of God, their love for learning and their encouragement in the lives of family and friends. May God, who lights our way and faithfully walks with us, continue to bless them. Gerry & Pat — Willowdale Caroline & Jeremy Johnson, David, Peter Neil & Klaas — Sarnia Rachel, Karissa, Jonathan, Peter Joan & Jack Vander Kooy — Richmond Hill Matthew, Janelle, Allison, Melissa, Hannah Jake & Janice — Clinton Ellen, Andrew, Bethany Alice de Koning & Yrjo Koskinen — Sweden Nick & Sheila — Hamilton Kelly, Danny Address: 20 Crispin Cres., Willowdale, ON M2R 2V7 E-mail: jan@dekoning.ca</p> <p>Obituaries Psalm 116 <i>Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints.</i> Peacefully at his home with the family at his side, with full trust in the Lord and Savior, entered into rest our dearly beloved husband, father, and grandfather HENRY HOUTER Dear husband of Jenny Houter (Lucas) and dear father and grandfather of: Don & Teresa Rachel, Kailee, Sonya, Jessica Hannah, Charlotte Jeff & Tina Rebekah, Meghan, Kristen Funeral services were held at the Covenant Christian Reformed Church, Barrie, Ont. on June 12, 2001.</p> <p>Gasselternijveenstermond, Nepean Dr., the Neth. Ont. On Wednesday June 13, 2001, at Carlton Lodge, Nepean Ont. LEMIENA ZUIDERVEEN (nee WILTING) passed away peacefully in the Lord, in her 94th year. Beloved wife of the late Lupp B. Zuiderveen. Lovingly remembered by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Thea & Bert Pennings — Carrying Place, Ont. Ann & John Kramer — Kingston, Ont. John & Tannie Zuiderveen — Edwards, Ont. Gayle & Roger Lanaue — Nepean, Ont. Jack Zuiderveen — Kingston, Ont. Survived by one sister in the Netherlands, 14 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral service was held at the Chapel of Tubmans Funeral Home, Pastor Ken Gehrels of Calvin Christian Reformed Church officiating. Interment at Capital Memorial Gardens. Correspondence address: Thea Pennings, 90 Gardenville Rd., RR 3, Carrying Place, ON K0K 1L0</p>	<p>"I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps 32:8c) On June 8, 2001, our heavenly Father called home EDZIENA MONSTER (nee SCHUILENGA) in her 83rd year. She died in the arms of her loving children after a short illness. Her husband, Frans Monster, predeceased her in 1995. She is tenderly remembered by her children and grandchildren: Mettje & Izaak Sevensma — Ter Apel, the Neth. Mark, Frans, Angela, Eiana John & Janice Monster — Hampton, Ont. Shawn, Kristin, Joshua, Laura, Danielle, Sarah Robert & Joanne Monster — Grimsby, Ont. Jonathan, Kathleen, Emily Angela & Bill De Vries — Newmarket, Ont. Nicole, David, Michael, Lisa She was buried June 12, on her 47th wedding anniversary.</p> <p>On June 6, 2001 Our heavenly Father called home CONNIE WESTERHOEK (nee SLOOT) in her 92nd year. Loving wife of John Westerhoek for 67 years. Loving mom of Jack & Ann Westerhoek — Thornhill Jane & Pete Klooster — Acton Neil & Nettie Roelfsema — Streetsville 11 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Memorial service was held at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton.</p> <p>Vacation - For Rent Luxury apartment, central Niagara, comfortable, well equipped, close to trails, conservation areas. Minimum 2 weeks stay. For info call 905-892-4903</p> <p>Job Opportunity</p>	<p>"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Cor. 5:17) May 19, 1927 - June 9, 2001 BARBARA (BOUKJE) WESSELIUS (nee PIEREMA) Our heavenly Father called home our precious wife, mother, Beppe, and Great-Beppe. Beloved wife of Lloyd for 51 years. Loving mother of: Alice & Sidney Nettinga — Courtice, Ont. Frieda & Gary Reid — Poplar Hill, Ont. Helen Wesseliuss — Oshawa, Ont. John & Trudy Wesseliuss — Bowmanville, Ont. Barb & John Dyrseth — Oshawa, Ont. Lovingly remembered by grandchildren Jeanette & Rob, Jeff & Crystal, Elizabeth, Christine, Greg & Staci, Kimberly, Sarah, Lee, David, Graeme, Annalise and Mara and great-grandchildren Andrea, Ethan, Payton, and Nigel. Funeral service was held at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, Bowmanville on June 12, 2001. Memorial donations may be made to The Parkinson's Foundation. Correspondence address: 103-100 Glen Hill Drive S., Whitby, ON L1N 8R4</p> <p>Church News Christian Reformed Church: New Clerk Bethany Christian Reformed Church Attn: Ann Kiers, Box 61, Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0 Phone: 905-899-1970 e-mail: clerkkiers@sympatico.ca</p> <p>The next meeting of Classis Niagara is planned for Wednesday, September 19, 2001 at 4 p.m. at the Smithville CRC, Smithville, Ont. Agenda materials, including requests to address Classis, should be received by the Stated Clerk before August 1, 2001. John TeBrake Stated Clerk</p>
<p>Thank You We thank God for the family and friends, both far and near, who remembered us on the occasion of our 55th wedding anniversary. Your prayers, cards, gifts, visits, attendance at the Open House and phone calls were very much appreciated. Leo and Tena Batterink Strathroy, Ont.</p> <p>We would like to thank our father John Westerhoek, who has been an inspiration to us all. Dad we would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts, for the love and care you have displayed to Mom through her time of need. Your acts of kindness will never be forgotten. We would also like to take this time to thank the staff at Holland Christian Homes. The help, care, and comfort you have given to our family will stay in our thoughts forever. Thank you Jane & Pete Klooster Acton, Ont.</p>				




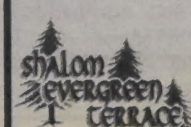



CO-ORDINATOR CHURCH RELATIONS/ DOMESTIC MINISTRIES

The Burlington office of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has a full-time opening with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). Responsibilities under Church Relations include assisting board delegates and alternates, deacons, individual supporters, and congregations to understand and financially support the ministries of CRWRC. Under the Domestic Ministries, responsibilities include facilitating CRWRC's connection with Diocesan Ministries of Canada and promoting refugee sponsorship as a CRWRC program. College diploma or university degree in Community/Public Relations or Marketing preferred, with a minimum of three years related experience. Previous experience in diaconal ministry is a plus. Effective communication skills one-on-one with individuals and with large groups are essential. Understanding and working knowledge of the CRWRC and the CRCNA is required.

A detailed job description is available upon request. For consideration, submit a letter of interest along with a copy of your resume by **July 27, 2001** to:

Director of Personnel
Christian Reformed Church in North America
3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 Canada
(616) 224-5881/Fax (616) 224-5896
E-mail: colemann@crcna.org

Classifieds

Teachers	Event	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous
<p>REXDALE, ONT.: Timothy Christian School, Toronto (Rexdale), invites applications from qualified and experienced teachers at the intermediate level for the 2001/2002 school year. We are looking to fill a 100% position — we are flexible and will consider all qualified applicants. TCS is a west-end Toronto school with an enrollment of approximately 200 students and a staff of 12 teachers. We have a full computer lab, an art, music and ESL program and a student population rich in cultural and denominational diversity. If you are interested in joining our teaching team, send your applications to:</p> <p>Att. Mrs. A. Kapinga-Gruning Timothy Christian School 28 Elmhurst Dr., Rexdale, ON M5W 2J5 Phone: 416-741-5770; Fax: 416-741-3359 E-mail: Kapinga-g@home.com</p>	<p>50th ANNIVERSARY Exeter Christian Reformed Church, Ontario, will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on September 22 and 23, 2001. Join us Saturday for brunch, Open House, barbeque and evening program or Sunday for our special services. For dinner reservations or more details, call Jennifer Branderhorst: 519-235-2990 or e-mail: bulletin@exetercrc.on.ca</p> <p>For Sale TRAILER FOR SALE AT Little Europe Resort Near Bracebridge This 31 foot 1999 Terry Trailer is equipped with all appliances and A/C, a side slide-out section and a large 20 ft x 10 ft deck. The trailer was delivered new to this fully serviced site in May 2000 and is covered by the manufacturer's warranty till May 2002. Contact Robert Monster toll free at: 1-866-945-1803 for more information.</p>	<p>"Do it now while you can make the choice. My wife & I want to make the move now, while we are both fit. We look forward to some freedom, with no more grass to cut, or snow to shovel. Surrounded by a community of friends we just can't wait!"</p> <p>Henry Rumph, purchaser and future resident</p> 	<p>Hope House is a safe, Christ centred home where girls aged 7 -13 will find nurturing and compassionate care in a long-term residence. We are currently seeking either a mature Christian woman or a mature Christian couple to fill our permanent live-in position at the home. This position will be of interest to those who enjoy creating a nurturing environment, and have had experience facilitating the healing and growth of young girls. Leadership and organizational skills are required. Applicants who fulfill the necessary requirements will be contacted by our Board with further details and information. Please forward cover letter and resume to:</p> <p>Hope House c/o Chartwell Baptist Church 228 Chartwell Road Oakville, ON L6J 3Z8 Tel: 905-569-7776 (ext.35) Fax: 905-842-5776</p>
<p>Job Opportunities</p>	<p>Personal</p>	<p>Now Under Construction! Act now - July only custom alterations available</p>	
<p>Looking for adventure in northern B.C.? Full-time single experienced milker and general farm help needed for a 40 cow tie-stall operation in Smithers, B.C. Call: 250-846-9606</p>	<p>Christian gentleman in early 30s, who enjoys church, music, sports and family, would like to meet a Christian lady at similar age. Please send letters to File #2720, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 & 2 Bedroom suites up to 1,398 sq. ft. • affordable suites from \$123,900 • includes 6 appliances and storage locker • secure indoor parking and car wash bay • access to optional support services • 55 plus Christian community 	
<p>IF YOU ARE A COMPASS, we have seventy young people seeking direction. Immanuel CRC of Brampton, Ont., is seeking a YOUTH DIRECTOR dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the existing programs of this well-established youth group. Church and area profiles available upon request. Please send resumes to immanuelyouthdirector@hotmail.com or mail to: Immanuel CRC, 63 Church St. E., Brampton, ON L6V 1G1 Attn: Youth Director Calling Committee. Contact Steve Ryan at 905-453-3645 for more information.</p>	<p>Job Opportunity Licensed or Apprentice Auto Service Technician required for busy repair shop. Apply in person or send resume to: West Lincoln Auto 3049 Reg. Rd. 14 RR 3 Smithville, ON L0R 2A0 Fax: 905-957-5683</p>	<p>Imagine the time and freedom to enjoy! Open House Monday's 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Mountainview CRC, 290 Main St. E., Grimsby Call 905.309.7888 today for details</p> <div data-bbox="717 1218 1024 1386"> <p>MEADOW VALLEY HOUSE Seniors Residence, Dundas, Ont. - 24 hr. assisted daily living care - meals, laundry service provided - English & Dutch spoken For more info, call 905-627-1108</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1058 1218 1332 1386"> <p>The Living Word Sermons for reading services. Contact:  CRC R. Vander Ploeg, Sec./Treas. 37 Brick Pond Lane Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1 Phone: (519) 539-2117</p> </div>	<p>PICTURE THIS!</p>  <p>You can advertise in Christian Courier's Business and Service Directory once a month for only: \$25.00 + GST Promote your business to thousands of readers across Canada.</p> 

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Events/Advertising

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- July 7 Wieringermeer Picnic, Queens Park, Stratford 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Call 519-631-6234 or 519-537-7549.
 July 7-8 50th anniversary Wallaceburg CRC, Wallaceburg, Ont. Saturday 4 p.m. social. Sunday 10 p.m. Praise service. For info. call 519-892-3569 or e-mail: jwdykema@kent.net
 July 8 Dutch Service, Ancaster CRC, 70 Garner Rd E (Hwy 53) Ancaster, Ont. 3 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz
 Aug. 14-16 "Retreat and Equip" Summer Education Conference at Redeemer Univ. Coll. Ancaster, Ont. Lecturer: Dr. David Holwerda, "The Apocalypse". Info. Rev. A. Beunk: 905-643-4340; fax: 905-643-4199
 Sept. 14-16 First CRC Brandon, Man., 50th anniversary. Call 204-727-4652 or 204-725-1445.
 Sept. 22-23 Exeter Chr. Reformed Church, Exeter, Ont. 50th anniversary. For info. call 519-235-2990
 Sept. 28 Liberation Choir Concert: Owen Sound, Ont. 8 p.m. Division United Church.
 Sept. 29 Liberation Choir, Bowmanville, Ont. 8 p.m. Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church.
 Oct. 20 Liberation Choir, Hamilton, Ont. 8 p.m., Christ's Church Cathedral.
 Nov. 23 Liberation Choir, Orangeville, Ont. 8 p.m., Orangeville Can. Ref. Church.
 Nov. 24 Liberation Choir, London, Ont. 8 p.m., St. Paul's Cathedral.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY COORDINATOR POSITION:

Do you have a passion for youth ministry? Do you have the ability to relate well to youth, and enable and equip them for leadership? Fleetwood CRC is seeking to fill the position of coordinator for youth and young adult ministries. This coordinator position will be 30 hours per week, with the possibility of full time. Our dynamic and growing congregation of 650 members includes 160 youth and young adults. If you have an interest in this position, you can contact Cindy Nyboer at the church office

Phone: 604-584-6244, Fax: 604-584-6294

e-mail: surreycrc@uniserve.com

or Brenda Timmer 604-576-2767 for a more detailed job description. Applications can be sent to the church office:

Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church
 201, 17619 - 96 Avenue, Surrey, BC V4N 4A9
 Attention: Personnel Committee

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When: August 14, 7:00 p.m. - August 16, 12:00 p.m. 2001

Where: Redeemer University College, Ancaster, ON

To register contact: Rev. Andrew Beunk

Phone: 905-643-4340 Fax: 905-643-4199

E-mail: abeunk69@calvin.edu

Cost: \$65 conference only; \$87 with meals; \$187 with meals/lodging

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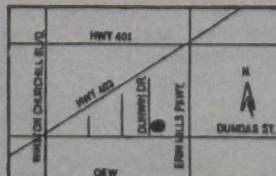
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News

Bishop defends church from Hindu extremists in India

Alan Doerksen

CHHINDIA, India — Christians in India are facing increasing opposition from extremist Hindu organizations. But some Christians have challenged opposing groups and have successfully defended their right to worship.

One recent example of this is the Evangelical Church of India (ECI) congregation of Chhindia (in the northwest Indian state of Gujarat), which was taken over late last year by Hindu extremists. According to Compass news service, nearly 200 members of two extremist Hindu organizations stormed the Chhindia church last November 26. The Christian community expressed shock at the desecration of the church and the attempt to take possession of a Christian house of worship.

Church crosses destroyed

Armed with swords and knives, members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) destroyed crosses inside and outside the church. Attackers also placed Hindu idols in the sanctuary, according to Compass.

The Hindu groups claimed that the land on which the church is built was given by the local people and that one of the locals is not happy with the gift. Hindus say the church should be turned into a Hindu temple. The land was given to Christians four years ago, and local Christians built a church and have been worshipping regularly on the site.

It took direct intervention from ECI leader Bishop Dr. Ezra Sargunam to help the Chhindia congregation get its church back. Sargunam arrived in Chhindia late last year to assess the situation and talk to officials about restoring the church. According to Sargunam, as reported in ECI's *Church Planter* newsletter, "When I arrived at the church..., our congregation, the pastors and I were prevented from entering into the church by the police.... There was no court order against us. Yet we were even physically removed from the portico of the church, and I was also hurt in the process."

Simply because they visited the church, Sargunam and two of his colleagues were charged by the Gujarat government under four sections of the Indian penal code: present when offense is committed; provocation to cause riot; trespass; attempting to commit an offence.

Bishop fasted for 11 days

"I was emotionally upset to see the desecration of the church, and this led me to undertake 11 days of



EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF INDIA PHOTOS

The Chhindia congregation worshipping outside its church building, praying that it would be restored to them.

fasting, six days in front of the church and five days in the hospital after my arrest," explains Sargunam. "I tried to meet the Chief Minister of Gujarat without much success. The CM did not want to meet me and the other bishops and Christian leaders as the government was so embarrassed because of its direct involvement, not only in the attempt to convert this church into a Hindu temple, but also because I had exposed the last two years of atrocities against Christians ... religious and social discrimination against the minorities in Gujarat — there are 300 such instances.

"More often than not," he explained, "the Gujarat government tries to give an impression that the churches are built on tribal land, which is not transferable. In this particular case, our argument is that the land was not transferred in favor of any organization, but at the request of eight joint owners ...

The church was provided for use of the tribals, though the building is owned by ECI.... We are hoping and praying for these poor, oppressed tribal Christians, which on many occasions has either been delayed or denied in our country."

The bishop's intervention, and the prayers and support of

many ECI and other Christians, made a difference, and now the Chhindia church has been restored to its members, although the right to worship in the church is still officially denied.

Sargunam writes, "Praise God! Because of his timely intervention, we have been able to hitherto prevent the church from being converted into a Hindu temple.... It is not just an issue of one church.... We are struggling for justice, freedom and the fundamental right to worship as enshrined in the constitution."

ECI works with Samaritan's Purse

ECI has been working actively to bring the Gospel to Hindus in India. For instance, last January and February, members of the church shared their faith with Hindu pilgrims gathering in Allahabad, India, to bathe in the Ganges River. Each year at that

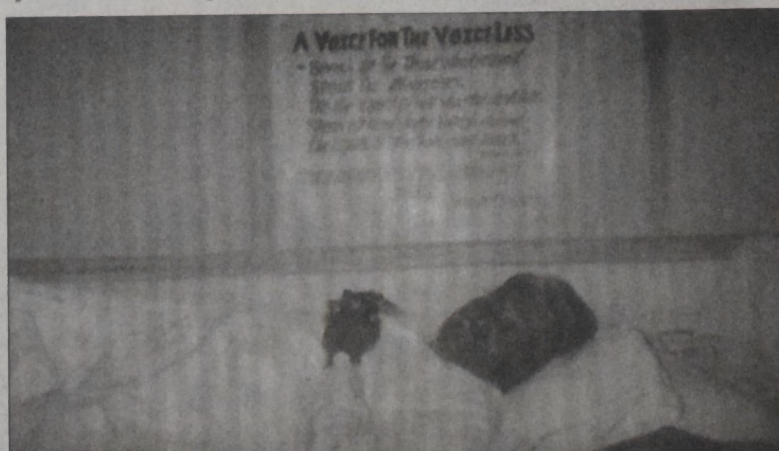
time, as many as 50 million Hindu pilgrims throng to Allahabad, reports Samaritan's Purse, which works closely with ECI in India.

Months of prayer

ECI operates a seminary in Allahabad and has more than 30 congregations in the area, reports Samaritan's Purse. "Undergirded by months of intercessory prayer, seminary students, pastors and church workers [distributed] Gospel literature and [witnessed] to Hindu pilgrims."

Since 1985, Samaritan's Purse has worked with ECI, helping to establish some of its 1,264 churches, and helping ECI start 12 Bible schools, which each train about 50 students a year.

Last January, Samaritan's Purse worked with ECI to help the people of northwest India recover from a devastating earthquake.



Bishop Dr. Ezra Sargunam fasting in a hospital, after his arrest in Chhindia. The plaque above his head reads "A Voice for the Voiceless, and quotes Proverbs 31:8,9.

News Digest

Gas crisis leads to church growth

CUBA (Religion Today) — In 1992, political and economic forces caused Cuba's worst gas shortage. In addition to other effects, the crisis had strategic implications for Cuba's churches.

Research shows that today, Cuba has more than 6,000 house churches, one in easy reach of every Cuban. What caused this development? During the gasoline crisis, a group of church leaders approached the government, asking for permission to plant house churches, because many church members could no longer travel 10 or 15 km to their church on Sunday morning. The only restriction laid down by the government was that the house churches had to be at least five km from the original church building.

"The Castro Administration's decision led to the explosive growth of house churches all over the island," writes Berna Salcedo, South American Co-ordinator for DAWN (Disciplining A Whole Nation).

Dennis the Menaces

TORONTO — With the recent death of Hank Ketcham, the cartoonist who created Dennis the Menace, some Britons have been reminiscing about another Dennis. The American Dennis made his debut on March 12, 1951. Five days later, a British Dennis first appeared, in the comic book *Beano*. Scottish cartoonist David Law drew a lanky teenager (who was later reduced to a nine-year-old) who has become Britain's longest-surviving comic villain, reports the *Globe and Mail*.

Fashion models to adorn new Bible version

(Religion Today) — Worthy News reports that a glossy magazine-style version of the Old Testament, featuring leading models photographed by fashion photographers, will be unveiled later this year. Claudia Schiffer and Markus Schenkenberg are the models expected to portray Eve and Adam in a project designed to attract young people who rarely read the Bible. But exactly who will be pictured in the new Illuminated Bible, which will retain the traditional King James text, is being kept under wraps.

The venture has been greeted with shock in some quarters. David Phillips, a leader within the Church of England, said: "It sounds like a gimmick that is entirely unnecessary."